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MEN AND WOMEN

OR

MANORIAL RIGHTS.

VOL. II.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR:

ADVENTURES OF SUSAN HOPLEY.

3 vols. post 8vo.

SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, LONDON.

A R I S T O D E M U S :

A Tragedy.

TAIT, EDINBURGH; SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, AND CO., LONDON.



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BY THE

AUTHOR OF THE "ADVENTURES OF SUSAN HOPLEY."

PUCK. "Lord what fools these mortals be!"

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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1844.



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CHAPTER XVIII.

"*Hieronimo*. See who knocks there.

Pedro. It is a painter, sir.

Hier. Bid him come in, and paint some comfort,
For surely there's none lives but painted comfort."

SPANISH TRAGEDY.

"Time goes by turns, and chances change by course,
From foul to fair, from better hap to worse.
The sea of fortune doth not ever flow—
She draws her favours to the lowest ebb ;
Her tides have equal times to come and go,
Her loom doth weave the fine and coarsest web :
No joy so great but runneth to an end.
No hap so hard but may, in fine, amend."

SOUTHWELL.

THE Scotch beggars, on a Saturday night, have
a custom of asking for a "bawbee, to put us
o'er the morn!" It was on a Saturday night

that Mrs. Rivers and her daughters were seated at the window of Mrs. Wood's second floor front room, looking vacantly down into the still busy street, and reflecting that they had nothing "to put them o'er the morn." The room was dark, for they had no money to buy food, much less candles; but as they preferred hunger to cold, there was a little bit of fire in the grate; for it was in the month of October, and the evenings were chilly. Sadly and silently they sat, for their hearts were depressed even below complaint; penniless, forlorn, and forsaken—forsaken by all but the faithful and humble Elias, who guessed their extremity, and could not aid them; and the equally faithful Russell, from whom they had so carefully concealed their situation, that he had no suspicion of it. He had succeeded in effecting Mr. Rivers' liberation, not by paying his debts, but by satisfying the creditors that detaining him was useless, as he had no property to give them, except it were the small annuity belonging to his wife, which, as it was the only means of subsistence his family had, he was determined she should never sacrifice; and Mr. Rivers also entered into an obligation, that if he lived to inherit the East-

lake estates, to which he was the heir at law, not only should their debts be discharged with interest, but a certain bonus should be given over and above to each creditor, in consideration of his present forbearance.

The captive was no sooner free, than he left London upon some expedition, the object of which he did not explain to his wife, further than by saying that he trusted it would be productive of something that would make them more comfortable ; and in order to furnish him with means for the journey, she had stripped herself of every shilling she could spare ; and, indeed, more than she could spare, without great inconvenience ; but as the period for receiving her quarter's dividend was approaching, she had ventured to be more liberal than she otherwise would.

The rent was due, and Mrs. Wood gave no credit, and their last shilling was gone, when, on the preceding Thursday, Mrs. Rivers, on applying for her fifty pounds, had found the house of the agent shut, and been informed that he had effected his escape to America. What was to be done ? Mr. Rivers was still absent—where, they knew not, for he had not written to them since his departure—a cir-

cumstance that did not surprise them, for in those days of dear postage, letters were too great luxuries for the poor. To confide in Russell, was to ask for aid; and, besides that their delicacy revolted from the exposure, they knew he was himself so poor, that he could not have assisted them without personal inconvenience; and they had so anxiously concealed themselves from the eyes of all their former acquaintance, refusing even to admit Charles Danby, Ellen's former lover, who had found them out, that every link was snapped, and they were as much alone in the world, as if they had never had any. Mr. Rivers had no connexions but the Eastlake family, with whom, for years, he had had no communication; and Mrs. Rivers had nobody with whom she could claim relationship but an uncle, a hard old man, who had never forgiven her for marrying a gambler—an offence he had punished by striking her name out of his will.

It was near ten o'clock, but being Saturday night, the shops were still open, and busy with the working-people and the poor, who, having received their scanty wages, were hastening to lay in their little store of provisions for the morrow; but how much poorer in their poverty

was the once affluent and happy family! They were poorer by all the differences of their education, of their early habits, of their cultivated minds, of their refinement, of the wants which the others knew not, and could never feel, and of the shame and delicacy which deprived them of all the resources which the less sensitive resorted to in their need. How much more forlorn they were than these! With the loss of their wealth, the world had fallen from them, and they were alone; the others had their families, their friends, their familiars, their gossips. There is a woman coming out of Dixon's shop—she looks very poor; in one hand she has three red herrings, and she has just been buying a couple of small tallow candles, sixteen to the pound, which are hanging by the wick, to the fore-finger of the other. But, see, she stops to speak to that other woman, who, leading a little girl by the hand, has just come up, carrying a bit of meat on a skewer; and another comes out of the chandler's shop, with a loaf of bread, and a small slice of cheese, and joins them. They shake their heads, and she with the herrings, holds up her fore-finger, and discourses volubly. Perhaps they are discussing the hardness of

the times, complaining of the dearness of provisions, and lamenting the daily increasing difficulties of supporting a family. But they *can* discuss, they *can* complain, they *can* lament. They have their hearers and sympathizers to whom they can talk of their distresses, and who are equally glad to relieve themselves, by talking of their own. They are not ashamed of exposing their necessitous condition, for they never were acquainted with anything better; their taste is not offended by it; their pride is not wounded by it; their senses are not shocked by the sights and smells around them; and if they can but get food enough to satisfy their hunger, no delicacies or disgusts stand in the way of its relish. They have fallen from no height, have lost no station; and their associates, and equals in birth and bearing, are in no better circumstances than themselves. They have little care for the future; as the days past have, somehow or other, provided for themselves, so, they expect, will the days to come; and they are unacquainted with that dark dread that would peer into the cloud that overhangs the wretch accursed with forethought. And how much of the sting of poverty do all these differences

extract—and how fortunate is it that they do so!

If poverty were actually to the poor, what it appears to the rich, it would be altogether unbearable, “and the state of the world would be undone.” And, see! a man joins the women, and takes up the child in his arms, and she lays a little hand on each rough cheek, and kisses him; he has been carrying coals, and his face and dress are begrimed with dirt, but he is not the less welcome to his wife and child; he is merry, too, and sets them laughing with some coarse joke, from which the nicer ear would shrink; and laughing so, they clap him on the back and part.

This was happy poverty to theirs, who from their dark chamber looked down upon it, and so they felt it.

“They are not rich,” said Caroline; “but we are poor indeed!”

The rent had been due the week before, but with some difficulty, by the intervention of Harriett, the maid, Mrs. Wood had been persuaded to wait till the day the quarter’s dividend was to be paid, but when that day passed, and the money was not forthcoming, she sent her unfortunate lodgers notice to quit. Mrs. Rivers

entreated her to wait till her husband returned, and in order to induce her to do so, she ventured so far as to say, that he was absent on some business, that they had every reason to hope would terminate in something advantageous to their circumstances. But the landlady was inexorable; she did not believe that any auspicious event awaited them; and if it did, she was sure the first use they would make of it, would be to quit her lodgings. She had never liked them; they were too far removed from her sphere of thought, habit, and condition, to be tolerated, unless interest had been very much on their side; and her aversion had been considerably augmented by the events of the tea-party; especially, as Mr. Wood had ventured, on a subsequent occasion, to defend and uphold them.

On the failure of the dividend, Mrs. Rivers had written to her uncle, with feeble hopes of success, but no answer was received, nor could be, for some days; and as Mrs. Wood insisted on their quitting the house without delay, they were in imminent danger of finding themselves turned shelterless into the street. It was in this extremity that the humble

Elias came to their aid. He had gathered the particulars of their situation from Harriett, and for some hours vainly racked his brain to find the means of assisting them. At last, he bethought himself of a widow woman, who kept a small inn on the Kent-road, with whom he had a slight acquaintance, and who, having a remarkably beautiful family of children, had expressed a great anxiety to have them grouped in a picture to hang in her best room; but the price of even so humble an artist as Elias was more than she felt justified in undertaking to pay. As, although he had a good deal of talent, he found it very difficult to make out a living, he had had some thoughts of offering to paint the picture, on condition of her lodging and boarding him for a certain period; and it now occurred to him that, instead of himself for some weeks, he might induce her to give shelter for some days, at least, to the forlorn and destitute family. He accordingly went to her, and partly by working on her feelings, and partly by complying with all her conditions about the picture, such as including herself in a red flowered silk gown that she kept for grand occasions, and the cat on the hearth-

rug, he prevailed with her to take them in; and having accomplished this point, he returned, satisfied and elated, but only to find that there remained one still more difficult to overcome, and that was, how to communicate to Mrs. Rivers what he had presumed to do.

They were on tolerably friendly terms, for the ladies liked him, and were fully aware of his vast superiority to the other inmates of the house; but he had never set his foot within their room, and their communications had been entirely confined to, apparently, accidental meetings on the stairs, or at the door; and now, all at once, to make such a stride as not only to visit them and avow himself acquainted with their distresses, but to propose to confer so great a favour on them, seemed an enterprise far beyond any courage he could summon for the task. He thought of making Harriett his ambassador, but there was an indelicacy in that that did not please him. He could not be sure that Harriett would not tell her mistress and the Fitzhughs, and he felt it was a transaction that should be kept as secret as possible; at last, he thought of writ-

ing a letter, and this he did, to the following effect:—

“MADAM,—I am a very humble person, born of poor parents, and have never known anything but poverty; you, madam, I am well aware, have been possessed of rank, wealth, and station; and I know that you are quite out of your place here, and that it is only in consequence of some great misfortune, that you have been obliged to seek shelter under this inhospitable roof. I feel I am taking an almost unpardonable liberty, and I can only hope that your goodness and condescension will excuse me, when I presume so far as to say, that I have accidentally learnt that your situation is at present rendered more embarrassing by an unforeseen disappointment; and also, that Mrs. Wood has conducted herself with her accustomed want of delicacy on the occasion; and it is with the utmost respect, madam, that I venture to solicit your attention to an arrangement which has occurred to me, and which, should it meet with your approbation, might be available for a few days, till something more eligible could be fixed upon.

“ Relying on your goodness to excuse this liberty, I remain, madam, with the utmost respect, yours,

“ ELIAS LONGFELLOW.”

“ Saturday, October 15th.”

Having finished this epistle, Elias went down stairs, and knocked at the door of Mrs. Rivers' apartment. “ Come in,” said Mrs. Rivers, with a tremulous voice, and casting a glance of apprehension at her daughters, for she fancied the visitor was Mrs. Wood. Elias opened the door, and, stretching out his long arm, presented the letter.

“ A letter !” cried all the three ladies, eagerly advancing to receive it, for they concluded it was from Mr. Rivers, and might contain some important news. Elias handed it in, and then retreating, shut the door, and with a palpitating heart waited the event outside. He was so frightened at what he had done, that he almost repented of his boldness ; and when, after an interval, the door opened, and Mary put out her head to see if he was there, he was half inclined to turn round and stride up the stairs again, without hearing what she had to say ; but he was very

glad he had not done so when he saw who it was, for he was much less afraid of Mary than of the others, and when he heard her say, in a sweet voice, "Come in, Mr. Longfellow—mamma will be happy to see you,"—so in he went, blushing and ambling, and not knowing which way to look, for confusion.

"Sit down, Mr. Longfellow," said Mrs. Rivers. "This is a very kind, considerate letter of yours, and it would be a foolish and useless pride, on our part, to pretend that there is not too much truth in it, but I fear no arrangement is practicable. Mrs. Wood will listen to no accommodation, I am certain."

"No, ma'am," said Elias, somewhat encouraged; "and I should be very sorry you should ask her to do so, for she's a person without any delicacy or respect for her superiors; but I am acquainted with a person, a widow, who has a comfortable little apartment, that if you would condescend to make use of it for a few days——"

"You are very good, Mr. Longfellow—very good, indeed;" and whilst Mrs. Rivers pronounced this acknowledgment, Mary gave him an approving smile, which was not lost upon him. "But you are aware that the cause of

our leaving this lodging is an unfortunate disappointment that has arisen from the failure of our agent, and——”

“ But I have settled all that, ma’am ; the person I allude to is willing to await your convenience. You wont be troubled upon that subject, I assure you, madam, if you would condescend to accept the offer.”

But as it was scarcely likely that a stranger would be so generous and forbearing, Mrs. Rivers pressed her inquiries further, till she had succeeded in extracting from Elias the truth, which he at length blushing disclosed.

“ How very good ! How very generous ! How very noble ! ” said Mrs. Rivers, Ellen, and Caroline. Mary uttered no exclamation, but she arose from her seat, and, going over to Elias, she shook hands with him, and quietly said, “ I am not at all surprised ; ” and then she seated herself beside him, and listened to the arrangements that were discussed for their removal ; for unwilling as they were to trespass on the profits of the poor young man’s industry, they trusted that, after a little time, from some quarter or other, they would be able to find the means of reimbursing him.

As Mrs. Willes had promised Elias to have

everything ready to receive them on Sunday morning, they resolved, in order to avoid any observation or impertinence, to take their leave of Mrs. Wood's house when they went to church. Accordingly, just before their departure, they sent her, by Harriett, a box of clothes, which they considered a sufficient guarantee for the rent due, and leaving word that they would send for the rest of their things the next day, they walked away without further explanation.

As Mrs. Wood knew nothing whatever of their alliance with Mr. Longfellow, and as she was sure they had no money, and, to all appearance, no friends, for no one had ever been near them but Mr. Russell, and he, happening to be particularly engaged just at that period, had not been seen for several days, when she learnt from Harriett that they were about to depart, she found herself attacked by a rather uneasy feeling of remorse, not enough to make her amend her ways and act more charitably, but just sufficient to make her cross and uncomfortable; so, desiring Mr. Wood "to get out of that, and not fill up the whole fireplace with his legs," she seated herself by the almost empty grate, and falling into a reverie,

sat vacantly staring at the black bars, till she was aroused by the shutting of the front door. Whereupon, she arose, and going into the passage, found Harriett there, looking out into the street.

“ Who’s that gone out, Haryett?”

“ Who should it be but the ladies ? Poor things !”

“ Which way are they gone ?”

“ Up the street. They’re going to church, I s’pose, for they’ve got their prayer-books in their hands.”

“ I wonder where they’ll go arter?” said Mrs. Wood.

“ I s’pose they’re gone to ax God Almighty,” said Harriett, and having slammed the door to with considerable energy, she dived down the dark kitchen stairs, into the shades below.

All that day Mr. Wood found himself dreadfully snubbed, and at night, upon his observing that his lumbago was very bad, and that he would give half-a-crown for a bit of poor man’s plaister to apply to his back, she took occasion to quarrel with him about half-a-crown that he had happened to lose the preceding year; adding, “ that his thoughtlessness and carelessness forced her to many things as she didn’t

like, and what wasn't nat'ral to her disposition;" after which she went to sleep and passed a pretty comfortable night.

On the following morning, about half an hour after a bill had been attached, by four red wafers, to the parlour window, announcing that there was "a second floor to let," a handsome carriage stopped at the door, out of which stepped a portly, middle-aged man, who inquired if Mr. or Mrs. Rivers were at home.

"They be gone from here," replied Harriett. "They went away yesterday, and we don't know where they be gone; but, may be, we may find out, when they send for their boxes."

CHAPTER XIX.

"Non simul cuiquam conceditur, amare et sapere."

"So like the chances are in love and war,
That they alone in this distinguish'd are—
In love, the victors from the vanquish'd fly,
They fly that wound, and they pursue that die."

WALLER.

"Je ne cherche qu'un."

MOTTO OF THE EARL OF NORTHAMPTON.

POOR Peggy Bland! How happy she felt when she awoke the morning after her last conversation with William! Not that she deceived herself, or believed for a moment that William's kindness had been prompted by love. She well understood that he had no love for her. He had repeatedly told her so—a very needless exercise of ungracious cruelty, because women who are in love themselves,

are always quick enough to discern whether or not their attachment is returned, and are invariably more disposed to doubt affection, where it exists, than to imagine it where it does not. Vanity flatters and deceives itself—a real and devoted affection never. Vanity “puffeth itself up, and is proud”—true love is humble, even to the dust. It is a worshipper, and delights in abasing itself to exalt its idol. But men understand women so little, that they neither know how to feel for them, nor to deal with them; and, as women are bound by laws which they have not made, neither to *explain* nor to *complain*, but are condemned to suffer, to sigh, to weep, to pine, and to die, in silence, men will never be any wiser; nor will they ever learn, to the end of the chapter, the respect that is due to a real, devoted, irresistible, unbought affection—unbought because unsought,—nor will they ever be able to distinguish betwixt the genuine love and the counterfeit—the love that loves the man, and the love that loves his flatteries and his courtship; but will go on, to the end, preferring the last, because it has cost them the most trouble to attain.

But to resume: Peggy, whose condition and

mode of life had not taught her the restraints which a higher station imposes, knew William did not love her, not only because he had told her so, but also because an unerring instinct had told her so, and because she knew that he loved another. Nevertheless, she awoke happy and grateful—happy, that at last he had seemed to understand her affection, and to pity, though he could not return it; and grateful for the kind and gentle words he had spoken. The coldness and scorn with which he had treated her had long made her miserable, and kept her in a constant state of irritation. Sometimes, urged by the pangs he inflicted, she assailed him with complaints, which he only answered by questioning her right to complain, and reiterating that he did not love her, and had never led her to suppose he did—truths which she admitted without reserve; but without softening his heart by the admission, for he had no pity for a love he did not participate. Then, indignant at his unprovoked unkindness and want of feeling, she would make up her mind to love him no more—at least, never to let him see that she did; she would appear cheerful and indifferent, return coldness for coldness, and scorn

for scorn. But, alas, the love was stronger than the resolution! and, some day, when she least intended it, an unusually frigid salutation, or ungracious answer, would shatter her little fortification with a breath, the pent up tears would burst forth, and she was at his feet again, a humble suppliant for a little mercy—a little pity—a little forbearance. This had been the course of poor Peggy's life and suffering, for a considerable time—such was the cross she had to bear, without sympathy and without aid; and a heavy cross it was. But now William would help her to bear it; instead of aggravating her troubles, he would soothe them. She did not want much to live on—a kind word, now and then, or a pitying smile; to be permitted to love him, and to have her adoration and her homage gently and graciously accepted, was all she asked. It was not much, and it seemed hard that so little should have been so long withheld; but she was ready to forget all the past, the future was to be so happy. She would be his friend—his sympathizing and consoling friend. His mistress was either faithless or indifferent—how strange that appeared to Peggy! She would have been more or less than a wo-

man to lament it. We are afraid we must admit, that, with all her love and compassion for William's suffering, that in her heart she rejoiced at it. But this she did not admit to herself; she tried to feel and to believe that she was very sorry; and of one thing she was quite sure—namely, that she heartily despised and abhorred Lucy.

All these mingled thoughts and feelings were fermenting in poor Peggy's head and heart, as she was aiding her mother in arranging their little household affairs, and in preparing their breakfast against her father returned from the early drill. When she had finished her work, she went to the door, that she might get a nod or a word from William, as he passed to his quarter. The parade was over and the officers and men were standing about in groups, conversing. She distinguished her father, and Serjeant Lawson, and several others, but she did not see William; however, he was sure to come presently. Every day he passed at that hour, and every day she stood there to see him, hoping and dreading; uncertain of the manner in which he would return her greeting, and yet unable to stay within, and avoid the pang that most likely awaited her. But now she was

sure he would be kind—just a word or a look was all she wanted, and then she would go about her day's business. She had some needle-work to do for one of the officers' wives; it had hung sadly on hand, for poor Peggy's heart was too busy, and her mind too restless, for her fingers to be very diligent. Unhappy love is very idle; but now she felt she could work, and she resolved to get through her task briskly. William was very long coming that morning, and her father still lingered about, talking with his comrades. However, at last he turned his steps in the right direction. He was coming to breakfast, and she should be obliged to go in without seeing William. How provoking! that morning of all mornings!

"Well, Peggy! So you have lost your sweetheart!" said one of the men that was with her father. "He's gone!"

Peggy's lips and cheeks were blanched in an instant: his despondency the night before—his telling her she would get over her love when he was *gone*, rushed into her mind—William had made away with himself! His kindness had been his farewell—a softening of the heart before death!

"Poor fellow!" said Serjeant Lawson; "it's

my blame, I'm fear'd, but who'd ha' thought he'd ha' taken it so to heart."

"He's the last man in the regiment I thought would have deserted," said Peggy's father.

"Deserted!" echoed Peggy.

"Ay," said Lawson, "he went away last night; but he'll be brought back again as sure as his name's William Bell! and there'll be a heartache a-piece for us. I'd almost as soon be shot myself as see poor William marching after his own coffin to the tune of the dead march!"

What a picture was that for Peggy! She turned into the house speechless.

"What's the matter, Peggy?" said her mother, observing her pale face; but Peggy had no words, she had only tears; so she seated herself on a box, buried her face in her lap, and gave way to them.

When Serjeant Bland came in, he told his wife what had happened. "What a fool the girl is!" said Mrs. Bland, "to sit there, breaking her heart for a man that don't care a penn'orth of snuff for her!"

"She can't help it, I suppose," said the serjeant; "some women are so. Come, Peggy, and eat your breakfast, girl! Perhaps Wil-

liam won't be shot after all ; he's a great favourite amongst the officers, and if they can let him off they will, I'm sure."

"If he would only come back at once, and give himself up," said Lawson, "perhaps they might, but if he stays away till he's taken, I'm feared he'll have but a bad chance."

"He'll be sure to be caught," said Bland. "Anybody may know William Bell for a soldier, let him put on what clothes he will !"

"I wonder which way's he took," said Mrs. Bland.

"Them that wants to know must find out that!" said Lawson, drily.

"I wish I could find out!" thought Peggy ; for although her tears were streaming without intermission, her ears were open to every word that was said, and she was aware that Lawson, through his wife, knew something of William's connexions, and could, therefore, probably, give a pretty good guess as to the road he was likely to take.

"He's been very low and desponding-like of late," said Bland ; "but I never thought it would come to this. He's gone after that girl he was fond of, I suppose."

"Most like he is," said Lawson.

Peggy had once heard the name of the place that Lucy Graham lived at, but it had escaped her memory. Now she would have given the world to discover it; but she saw, much to her satisfaction, that Lawson did not mean to communicate anything that would be likely to facilitate William's apprehension. She wished he would make an exception in her favour, but it was not probable he would. She took an opportunity of sounding him in the course of the day, but he was on his guard, and professed to know nothing on the subject. Poor Peggy's anxiety of mind was inexpressible. To have lost William just when his kindness was beginning to heal the wounds his unkindness had made, was cruel; the pain arising from the knowledge that it was his exceeding love for another that had taken him away, and induced him to forfeit his life, was still more cruel; and, worse than all, was the almost certainty that she should never see him again, unless it was as a criminal led forth for execution. Every hour she expected to behold him brought back, marched in, handcuffed between two soldiers. She never put her head out of the door or the window, but she fancied she saw somebody looking like

him; and at every unusual noise her heart sank with terror—"They're bringing in William!" She could neither eat, nor sleep, nor work; her mother scolded her, and said she was a fool; and her father desired her to leave Peggy alone, for that "some women were so, and they couldn't help themselves." The men laughed at her, because they thought a woman *fretting after her sweetheart* was a legitimate subject for ridicule; and the women blamed her, wondering she had so little spirit as to care for a man that had shewn he despised her. But in spite of all they could say, Peggy loved and wept on, till one day, after she had been consuming her poor heart in this way for upwards of a week, the regiment received their route: they were to proceed immediately to the coast, preparatory to their embarking for the Peninsula.

The morning after this news arrived, Peggy was standing at the door, thinking on the one subject that always occupied her, when Serjeant Lawson came out of his quarter, sucking his fingers; and when he stopped to speak to her, she observed that they were stained with ink. "He has been writing to Mrs. Lawson," thought she, "to tell her about the route

we've got. I wish I could see the direction of the letter. I wonder if he has left it at home, or whether he has it in his pocket!" Presently Lawson walked on, and as the door of his quarter stood very invitingly open, Peggy thought there could be no very great harm in taking a peep; so, as soon as he was out of sight, she ran across. There lay two letters on the table, sure enough, folded and directed, but not sealed—the serjeant was gone in search of some wafers—and one of them was to Mrs. Lawson. Peggy read the address eagerly, and impressed it upon her mind by repeating it several times—"Eastlake, by York,"—and then she retreated, and was at her own door again before the serjeant returned. The first opportunity she had she wrote it down, and committed the paper to her bosom; and being satisfied on this point, she sat down to work with all her might and main. Her needle flew as if her life depended on finishing her task by a certain period. She wasted no time in looking out of the window for William, nor in standing at the door to listen for news of him; she scarcely allowed herself leisure for her meals, or for her needful rest. Her

mother commended her, and said she was glad to see she had got "over that nonsense;" and her father said "that was all very well, but there was moderation in everything; perhaps, however, her work might be good for her now, and drive other things from her mind, so it was best to let her have her own way."

So she slaved on; and she was still hard at work when the order came for the regiment to march. Her father was to go with the first division; she and her mother with the baggage the day after. Peggy sat up all night to work; in the morning her father marched off. She kissed him and bade him "good-by," and he bade her be "a good girl, and keep a good heart—men were not worth fretting about." In the course of that morning, Peggy finished her job, and then she took it home to the lady who had employed her. As she went through the barracks to the officers' quarter, she met a gay young ensign, who seized her as she passed, and snatched a kiss. Peggy slapped his face with a smartness that made it tingle, and then she proceeded on her way to the lady she was in search of, and delivered her work.

"I was going to send for it back, and give it to somebody else, Peggy," said the lady. "I thought you did not mean to do it."

"I have been very long about it, indeed, ma'am," said Peggy; "but I have worked hard this last week to get it finished, because we wanted the money for the route."

This was a hint not to be misunderstood, so the lady settled Peggy's little account, and dismissed her.

The next morning, with the earliest dawn of light, Mrs. Bland heard Peggy stirring, and asked her what she was doing. Peggy said she had a great deal to do, and begged her mother not to mind her; so after a little grumbling, Mrs. Bland turned round and went to sleep again. When she arose herself, some time afterwards, Peggy was missing; however, she was too busy to go and look after her, but the hours passed, and the wagon was ready to start, and Mrs. Bland's household gods were all comfortably reposing in it, and still Peggy was absent. Mrs. Bland was very angry, and she called her step-daughter an idle, thoughtless, good-for-nothing young minx; but she did not choose to lose sight of her furniture, or to abandon the chance of

getting a comfortable quarter by staying behind, "the serjeant expecting her too," so she begged a friend to take care of Peggy, first to scold her well, and then bring her along in the next wagon, which the friend promised to do. But Peggy did not return, and the next wagon and the next departed without her, till at length the whole regiment had moved off, and still nothing had been heard of Peggy. There were various opinions as to what had become of her, but the prevailing one was, that she had gone after William, though, as to her finding him, that seemed to the last degree improbable; especially when, two days after her disappearance, the news arrived from Eastlake that he was suspected of being either a principal or an accessory in the murder of the baronet. The letters stated that he was known to have been on the spot at the time the crime was committed, dressed in plain clothes; and wearing a fur cap, and that active inquiries were making for the purpose of ascertaining what course he had afterwards pursued.

All the regiment, officers and men, were grieved at this intelligence; and so good was William's character that many refused to be-

lieve in the possibility of his guilt. Lawson, however, thought it but too probable,—not that he appreciated William's character less, but because he was better acquainted with the amount of the jealousy and irritation under which he had deserted; but he kept his thoughts to himself, and never admitted that he knew more of William's affairs than other people. He regretted very much that he had told him anything that was going on at Eastlake; and, reproaching himself as partly the cause of the mischief, he was resolved not to aggravate it by any disclosures that might be further injurious.

Meantime, Peggy was trudging along the road with a little bundle at her back, and her small earnings in her pocket, ignorant of the new calamity, and of the augmented danger of her idol; and if not happy, certainly much happier than she had been since William's departure. The motive she assigned to herself for going was, that if she could find him, she would urge him to return immediately, and give himself up—in which case, it was thought, his previous good character and conduct would be allowed to count so far in his favour, as to induce a very mitigated sentence. This object she trusted

would excuse the step she had taken, to him, should she succeed in discovering him; for without such a pretext she would scarcely have dared to present herself before a man, who, she knew, was far from desiring her company, and who was, in fact, sacrificing his life for the sake of another woman. She thought he could hardly be angry with her or receive her ill, when he learnt her motive, and it was possible, if he would take her advice, that she might thus do him an essential service, and be the means of saving his life. And what a blessed thing that would be! Quite enough to content her for the rest of hers, she thought. And in the meanwhile, she was so much happier, trudging along the road in pursuit of him, supported by the hope, however faint, of finding him at last, than crawling along in a wagon, in an opposite direction, consuming her heart with an anxiety that nobody sympathized with or shared; and if he would not follow her counsel and return, she might be of some use in aiding his evasion; whilst if, on the contrary, he should unfortunately be apprehended, she would tramp back to the regiment by his side—he would be glad, then, to have somebody at hand that loved him.

The sum total of all was, that she could no longer exist in a state of inaction—her sufferings were more than she could bear; come what may, she must try and see William again.

For the rest, Peggy was a soldier's daughter, born, if not quite by the road side, but one remove from it ; inured to hardships from her infancy, knowing little of fear, and, though not without the natural modesty of an honest and virtuous girl in her station of life, without any of the artificial delicacy that would have been incommodious on such an expedition.

With respect to her father and mother, they would probably feel some little uneasiness during her absence, and when she returned, her mother would be very angry; and her father would bid his wife leave the girl alone; for that "some women were so, and they could not help themselves," an axiom which Peggy knew, from her own experience, to be perfectly incontrovertible.

Finally, Peggy was in love—heart and soul in love; and when that is the case, there is no more to be said—Serjeant Bland was quite right—they cannot help themselves.

CHAPTER XX.

"Sir, I have heard
Of your misfortunes ; and I cannot tell you
Whether I have more cause of joy or sadness."
FAIR MAID OF THE INN.

WHEN William leaped over the wall at the Four Stones, to avoid being seen by the person that was approaching, he waited till he had ascertained who it was, before he moved away, lest Lucy should have been exposed to any danger. When, however, Mr. Groves appeared, as he felt satisfied she had nothing to apprehend from him, he crept softly between the trees, till he came to a path-way, of which there were several in the wood, intending then to hasten his steps, in order to remove himself as far as possible from the spot, before any

- search for the assassin should be instituted; but he had not gone far, when he nearly stumbled over the extended legs of a man, stretched at the foot of a tree, whom, to his surprise, he perceived to be Leonard Graham. At the first glance he thought he was asleep, and he was about to wake him, when a second observation satisfied him that he was in a sort of swoon, or, at least, in a state of exhaustion bordering on insensibility. His complexion was ghastly, large drops of perspiration exuded from the forehead, and the features had a strong expression of horror. The conviction that he was the assassin darted through William's mind — his countenance was his accuser. There was no difficulty in finding the motive; jealousy of Jessie, and indignation at the insults offered to his sister, were sufficient. What was to be done? He hesitated a moment, Leonard stirred, and shewed symptoms of recovery—and then William fled. There was little time for reflection; but the rapid considerations that decided him were, that he was himself in no condition to assist Leonard, and that he should only be rushing into useless danger by remaining; and he felt that it would be better for both parties that

they should have no communication. He regretted very much that he had seen him at all, lest, in case of being apprehended himself, he should be obliged to acknowledge the place and the condition in which he had found him. He might be forced to do so in self defence; a possibility, the mere idea of which lent wings to his feet.

During the remainder of the evening and the night, he walked with all the speed he could, keeping chiefly to the high road, as being less fatiguing, and as likely to conduct him to a greater distance in a direct line, than by paths and fields, with whose bearings he was not well acquainted. As morning dawned, he abandoned the road, and struck into more unfrequented ways; but by this time he felt very weary, for he had walked a considerable distance the day before, and as he was also exhausted for want of food, he approached a small public-house he saw at the entrance of a village, and demanded some breakfast, which was served to him by a young girl, apparently not more than sixteen years of age, the servant of the house; the mistress of which, a widow, at that early hour, had not shaken off her morning slumbers. When the

traveller's appetite was satisfied, he asked for a bed, which being quickly prepared for him by the same assiduous hand, he gladly reposed his weary limbs, and was soon buried in a profound and refreshing sleep.

In the meanwhile, the day at the "White Horse" ran its course like all other days. In due time, the landlady forsook her couch, and descended to take her breakfast in the bar; which having done, she proceeded to inspect her bottles, and to see how much rind could be furnished from a half-mouldy lemon that lay upon the shelf. She then arranged her glasses, broke some sugar, and scolded Letty, the pretty maid; and when she had done all this to her satisfaction, she seated herself in an old easy chair, whence she dispensed objurgations to Letty, news to the inquiring, and gossip to the inquisitive, together with food to the hungry, and drink to the thirsty—the former gratis, but the two latter only for value received.

"What sort of a man's that in bed in the Dragon?" said she to Letty; for such was the designation of the apartment in which William was sleeping.

"He's a very handsome young man," said Letty.

"Handsome is as handsome does," replied Mrs. Mott. "Does he look as if he'd got any money in his pocket?"

"He's a very genteel-looking young man," said Letty.

"Genteel!" echoed Mrs. Mott. "Some strolling player, I dare say."

"I don't think he's one of that sort," said Letty. "He's too grave-like and steady to be one of them."

"Has he got anything with him?"

"He's got a bundle."

"Travelling to look for work, perhaps," suggested Mrs. Mott.

"May be," said Letty; "but he's as straight set up as a soldier."

"A footman out of place, very likely," said Mrs. Mott.

"He's not unlike to John, the footman, up at the Hall," said Letty; "but he hasn't such fine linen, and he seems in trouble like."

"An odd time to arrive a-foot," observed the sagacious Mrs. Mott. "He must have been travelling all night. Did he seem tired?"

"Very," answered Letty; "and his shoes are covered with mud."

"Got out of jail, perhaps," suggested Mrs. Mott. "But he's got a bundle, though?"

"Yes," answered Letty; "besides, his behaviour's genteel like, and though his shoes are muddy, he has a tidy look, somehow, not as if he'd been in jail; though his hair's cropped, to be sure."

"A deserter, I shouldn't wonder," suggested Mrs. Mott.

"Lauk!" said Letty; "poor fellow!"

"There's a quantity of 'em going about, now. I read something in the paper about it, t'other day."

Here the conversation was interrupted by a customer, who wanted some bread and cheese, and beer; and as he was soon followed by others, the affairs of the traveller up stairs were for a time forgotten. However, as the day advanced, and nothing was heard of him, the hostess, who thought it was high time he should be wanting something to eat, inquired of Letty if he was not stirring yet; but Letty said that she had listened at the key-hole the last time she was up stairs, and all was quiet.

"Take care he's not off without paying the score," said Mrs. Mott.

Letty said she was sure he wouldn't do such

a thing; but as his handsome face was the only guarantee she had for his honesty, the prudent Mrs. Mott desired her to go up stairs, and peep into the room, to make sure that he was yet forthcoming. There, however, he lay, fast asleep, all-unconscious of the suspicions and speculations of which he was the subject. He looked so handsome, that Letty somewhat forgot her prudence, and was tempted to advance a little into the room to take a nearer view. His clothes were lying on a chair by the bedside, and on the floor lay a glove which had apparently fallen from the pocket. Letty saw at once that it was a soldier's glove, for they had often had recruiting parties billeted at the house; and she took it up to examine it; and there, sure enough, was his name, and the number of his regiment marked on it.

"Poor fellow!" said she to herself, as she thrust it in his pocket, lest anybody else should enter the room and see it; "it's lucky for him there's no soldiers hereabouts, now; for I dare say he is a deserter, as missus says."

But whilst in her heart she was rejoicing in the security that this circumstance promised, danger was nearer at hand than she imagined. She had scarcely had time to return down stairs

and assure her mistress that the lodger was safe above, still fast asleep, when two soldiers entered the house, with a deserter handcuffed between them. Letty started and turned as pale at the sight of them as if she had been a deserter herself. Fortunately, as she thought, as it prevented their falling into conversation with Mrs. Mott, instead of entering the tap-room, for the sake of the better security of their captive, they turned into a private parlour, where it fell to her lot to supply them with the refreshments they required; in the process of doing which, she observed, to her dismay, that the number on the soldiers' caps was the same as that on the sleeper's glove. The prisoner they had with them was very young, and looked so desponding and miserable, that his captors sought to cheer him; bidding him not be so down-hearted; things, they said, mightn't turn out so bad as he expected; he was not the first man that had deserted and been brought back again; and, the worst come to the worst, perhaps he'd only be transported; and may be, beyond seas, it mightn't be so bad as people thought. At this scurvy consolation, the boy, for he was scarcely a man, could not restrain his tears, and began to talk

of his poor mother; for the sake of seeing whom he had got into this trouble.

"People's motives is various," observed one of the men, who appeared to be a corporal. "Some do it because they don't like the profession—they want more liberty; others 'cause they haven't no taste for hot lead nor cold steel; others, again, get home-sick; but most I've seen, there's been a girl at the bottom of it."

"That's been the ruin of William Bell, I doubt," said the other. "I always heard he was fond of a girl at the place where he comes from. What's the name of it?"

"Eastlake," replied the other, taking a letter from his pocket and referring to it. "We can't be far from it now. Do you know, my girl, how far it is to a place called Eastlake?"

"No, sir," replied Letty.

"He'd sure never go there!" said the second man.

"I don't know that," answered the first. "I've always observed that when a man deserts, he most times goes to his friends first, particular them that's love-sick. Do you know of any deserters hereabout?" he added, addressing Letty.

"Oh no, sir," replied Letty; "they never

comes this way; we've too many looking out for them, and we've most times soldiers quartered in the village."

"What's the name of the village?"

"Abbotsley, sir."

"I should have no objection to stay at Abbotsley all night," said the second man. "We've had a long march this morning. Have you any beds?"

"Yes, sir—no, sir—yes, sir," said Letty. The first "Yes, sir," being the natural and the true answer; the "No, sir," the offspring of an apprehension that they would stay and discover William; and the second "Yes, sir," being prompted by the fear that if they applied for beds to Mrs. Mott, her motive for saying there were none might be discovered.

"Yes, sir—no, sir," said one of the men, laughing; "which is it?"

"I didn't know whether our beds might suit your honours," said Letty, dropping as respectful a curtesy as if she had been speaking to their colonel; whilst, from the tone of her voice, it was impossible not to imbibe some very unpleasant suspicions about the beds.

"We must get on," said the first man.
"How far is it to a place called Walton?"

"Oh, not far sir; a short five miles," replied Letty. "The inn's called the Eagle. People say it's a very good one indeed."

By this time their meal was over, and Letty's alarm was considerable, with respect to their next movements. Mrs. Mott was a dreadful gossip; and if she got into conversation with them, which would inevitably happen if they went to the bar to pay their score, it was ten to one she did not tell them of the traveller up stairs, and of the suspicious circumstances attending his arrival. Whilst Letty was hovering about the passage in the hope of intercepting them, they arose and came to the door, precisely at which crisis, somebody in the tap room having called for another pint of beer, she was obliged to go and draw it. When she came back, the three men had entered the tap-room, and whilst one was looking at a print of Sir Arthur Wellesley, that hung over the chimney piece, the other was exactly where she did not wish to see him—leaning over the bar, and talking to the landlady. Letty had half a mind to run up stairs and warn William of his danger; but she feared it would be use-

less, as it would be impossible for him to rise and dress himself, and get beyond pursuit, before it would be upon his heels. All she could do was to fidget about in the most uneasy state possible, and interrupt the conversation every moment, by asking her mistress all sorts of questions, and for all sorts of things. She wanted soap; and she thought the barrel of beer was getting low, and she wished to know if she should tilt it; and she was afraid the new barrel of ale was leaking, and she wished her mistress could tell her where the spigot was, and then she'd draw off a little. She thought if Mrs. Mott would step to the cellar and look at it herself, it would be a good thing—indeed, she'd some suspicion there was something wrong about the barrel altogether. The coals too were getting very small, and she wished to know whether she should throw a little water over them; and she wanted the bottle of blacking. But this last request was injudicious; for, by a very natural concatenation of ideas, it immediately brought to Mrs. Mott's mind the dirty shoes of the lodger up stairs. "Ah! by the bye," she said, "what's become of that fellow? Is he in bed all this time?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," answered Letty. "Do but look here! See what a mess they've made of this here cloth."

"Shameful!" exclaimed Mrs. Mott. "I've often bid you not lay a cloth for bread and cheese, haven't I?"

"It was the exciseman," replied Letty.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Mott. "Well, you must wash it. But as I was going to observe—let me see, what was I saying? Oh, it was about a man that came here this ——"

"Oh, my! If the mice haven't been at the candles, as sure as my name's Letty Butters!"

"What, again?" cried Mrs. Mott.

"I'm certain they've been at them again!" said Letty. "There's no keeping anything from them 'ere creaturs. They gnaws my shoes and stockings so at night, that I shall be obliged to go barefoot, by and bye."

"We must have a tin box for the candles," said Mrs. Mott. "I can't think where the mice come from, we never used to have any at all. But as I was going to observe, there was a man came here this morning——"

"Oh, lauk! look mum! there's Lady Elizabeth, and all the young ladies, and the gover-

ness, and the nursery maids, and the baby, all a walking past—and if they arn't looking this way! What a pity you did not happen to be at the door!"

Everybody except the prisoner turned to the window to look at Lady Elizabeth, and all the young ladies, and the governess, and the nursery maids, and the baby, walking past; during which interval Letty nudged the elbow of the deserter, who was sitting with his head upon the table, buried in his own sad thoughts. When he looked up, she pointed to the door, intimating at the same time, by her eyes, that his captors were off their guard; not that she expected he would have time even to get out of the room before their attention was recalled to him, but she sought to make a diversion; and, so far, her stratagem succeeded. The young man rose suddenly, and in so doing made a noise with the bench on which he had been sitting, which caused the soldiers to turn their heads. There was something that seemed to strike them as suspicious in his attitude, and in Letty's proximity. He was standing up, looking anxious and confused; and she purposely assumed an air of embarrassment. They moved from the window, and approached

him, looking hard at her, and then at each other.

"We had better pay the score, and be moving on," said one of them.

"I believe we had," said the other, significantly. Whereupon, they advanced to the bar again, and having inquired what they'd to pay, they threw down the money; and casting an expressive glance at Letty, they bade the landlady "Good morning," and quitted the house.

Letty watched them as long as she could distinguish their red coats in the distance; and when they were fairly out of sight, she went up stairs, and, waking the sleeper, told him of the danger he had escaped.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Haply I think on thee—and then my state
(Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven's gate ;
For thy sweet love remember'd, such wealth brings,
That then I scorn to change my state with kings."

SHAKSPEARE.

"This visit sweet, from thee, my pretty dear,
By how much more 'twas unexpected, comes
So much the more timely ; witness this free welcome,
Whate'er occasion led thee."

FAIR MAID OF THE INN.

WITH grateful thanks, and a kiss given behind the landlady's back to the friendly Letty, William took his leave of "The White Horse" and its inmates, having first qualified himself for a walk by a hearty meal of eggs and bacon and a draught of good ale. The lucky chance

and kind intervention, by which he had escaped falling into the hands of the detachment from his own regiment, to whom he was personally known, he considered peculiarly fortunate, as he did not think it likely he should meet any more of them in that district; and he hoped to gain time enough to place a considerable distance betwixt himself and the sources of his most imminent danger.

What was to be the termination of his wanderings, provided he escaped pursuit, he did not exactly know. He had no fixed plans; but, in the meantime, he turned his steps in a southerly direction, both because it was the road that led to London, where he thought concealment was easier than in any other place, and because it was the one that removed him furthest from Eastlake and his regiment. No doubt his situation was very embarrassing and full of peril, and he was far from having a mind at ease. Even if he ultimately escaped, the sacrifices he had made, considering his prospects of promotion, were great and lamentable; and if he were taken, the fate he had to anticipate was dreadful. Still, as there is no pain that can equal the pains of love—no agony that can equal the agony inflicted by

the neglect and unkindness of those who are dear to us, William was a much less unhappy man than he had been before he had seen Lucy. That interview, short as it was, had cleared up every doubt. He was satisfied that she had neither loved Sir John Eastlake living, nor lamented him dead; and all the mystery of his own unanswered letters had been dissipated by a word. Such was the relief this explanation had afforded him, that could he by a breath have been restored to all the advantages he had lost by his rash act, on the condition of still enduring the anguish he had suffered before his desertion, and being still condemned to carry the worm of jealousy gnawing at his heart, he would have unhesitatingly rejected the boon. True, he might be overtaken, and be led back a manacled prisoner to the regiment where he had always been looked up to by his comrades and respected by his officers; there, to be tried, degraded, and condemned, if not to death, to something perhaps worse. But Lucy Graham loved him—Lucy Graham was true to him—her heart, he was sure, had never swerved from him, and, living or dead, he was certain it never would. She would be faithful to the

grave, and beyond it. To know this was life—to doubt it was death; and by so much, therefore, the present being better than the past, he went on his way with a heart comparatively light.


As he still thought it better to travel by night than by day, he walked on as before, till the morning dawned; and then, quitting the high road, he looked about for some quiet spot where he might obtain refreshment, and pass the day cheaply and safely. He was not without money; for he had been a careful soldier, and he had brought away with him all he had; but his means required good husbanding, especially as it might be some time before he found any opportunity of improving his circumstances.

In search of such a place of rest as would suit him, he turned into a lane—a beautiful specimen of the green lanes of England it would have been, but at that period of the year its banks were without flowers, and its hawthorn hedges were nearly bare—and having proceeded along it for about a mile and a half, he found himself upon a village-green. In the middle was a small mound or burrow, on which stood a single tree, and under which,

tradition asserted, several gigantic bones and relics of Roman armour had been found. Here the turkeys gobbled, the geese hissed, the ducks quacked, the hens cackled, and the cocks crew, through their contented lives; whilst their almost equally contented, and not much more enlightened, owners, overlooked their proceedings and superintended their welfare, from their open cottage doors, which encircled the green. Through an opening to the right was seen the steeple of a little church, peeping over the roof of a neat parsonage, that seemed embowered in trees, but no inn was visible. William ascended the mound, in order to attain a better view; but neither deformed cow nor three-legged horse invited the weary traveller to rest; and as it was so early, that even the inhabitants of that primitive spot had not yet quitted their beds, he stretched himself under the tree, to wait till he saw somebody about, that could direct him to what he sought.

Though it was late in the autumn, the weather was mild, and the sun had risen bright and clear from the horizon; the grass was still green, and the air of neatness and comfort about the cottages, together with the silence and solitude around him—peopled though it

was—rendered the scene inexpressibly beautiful. There was something about it at once soothing and painful. What a haven of rest, he felt, would such a spot be for him! What could he desire better, than there to spend his days, with Lucy Graham for his wife! He selected the cottage he should prefer, and his imagination painted the interior, with his venerable mother seated on the hearth, and Lucy, with her first-born baby at her breast. Not choice, but necessity, had made him a soldier, and although his natural endowments and good education, together with the desire he had to discharge his duty conscientiously and obtain promotion, had combined to make him a good one, he had no taste for the profession; and he felt vividly how much better he was calculated for a rural life, and how much happier he should be if such a destiny were allotted him. If ever he got over his present troubles, and were again a free man, he fancied it was on this spot he should like to live and die. But if, on the contrary, fortune were against him, should he be taken, and be banished for ever from this country, how much would it aggravate his misery to think of the Garden of Eden he was leaving behind him!



The green lanes and village greens, the cottage gardens, the modest steeple, and the solemn bell that knolled to church ! He felt sure that if such an evil destiny awaited him, he should dream by night, and see visions by day, of this lovely village, which a sign-post, at the termination of the lane, with a hand painted on it, had informed him was called Hillocksgreen.

Thus half sad and half soothed, he lay gazing around him, thinking and feeling at first vividly, then dreamingly, by and by indistinctly ; and then gradually his eyelids fell, his waking thoughts became mingled with grotesque fancies, his head slid, from the hand that supported it, to the ground, and he slept.

He had not been long asleep when a man, wearing much the same dress he had on himself—that is to say, a fur cap, a short coat of coarse grey cloth, and fustian trousers, but distinguished by a pair of very bushy red whiskers—emerged from the lane, and having paused for a minute to look about him, was proceeding across the green when he suddenly caught sight of the sleeper ; whereupon he started, and seemed about to retreat, but after another look, probably judging from William's

attitude that he was not awake, he altered his mind, and approaching the mound, he ascended it, cautiously, however, and keeping in the rear of the sleeper. But, apparently encouraged by the immobility of the body, he gradually drew nearer, and when quite close, he stooped down, and leaning over, took a deliberate inspection of the features. When his curiosity was satisfied, he arose, and retreating as cautiously as he had approached, he descended the hill, and, crossing the green, advanced to a neat-looking cottage that stood rather apart from the rest, and attempted to lift the latch ; but the door being fast, he moved to the window, and tapped with his knuckles. Presently, the casement was opened, and the head of an elderly female, whose attire denoted that she had only just stepped from her bed, was protruded. At sight of the man she started, clasped her hands with an expression that might be of joy or grief, according to the commentary the countenance afforded, but which, certainly, betokened astonishment — in another moment the door was opened, and the stranger disappeared within it.

For a short time again all was quiet, and

then gradually the little world around became awake and stirring. Doors and windows were opened, a light grey smoke began to curl upwards from the chimney-tops, and children emerged from the cottages, some with hunches of bread in their hands, which they seated themselves upon the threshold to eat; whilst the neighbouring gossips, as they went in and out performing their household offices, greeted each other, remarking on the bright morning, and inquiring how Tommy's chin-cough was, and Betsy's measles, and what sort of a night Master Mepham had passed, and more than one remarked that Mrs. Lines had overslept herself that morning, for her door was not yet open. However, it was not long before a thin vapour curled upwards from her chimney too, betokening that, though the windows and doors remained closed, the dwellers within were stirring as well as the rest of the world.

In the meantime, several of the children had opened their little garden gates, and had crept out upon the green, some beginning to pick up stones and heap them together in squares or pyramids, because, without being conscious of it, they had a desire to construct some-

thing; others picking up stones also, but for the purpose of throwing them at the ducks and geese, who were busy hunting for their morning's meal, because, without reflecting on the subject, they found it pleasant to torment something. Others, again, divided their bit of bread with their own dog, or a neighbour's, because they found it agreeable to be kind to something; and others seated themselves at the door, with a kitten or a puppy in their arms, which they wrapped in their pinafores, and kissed, and hugged, and rocked, singing to it, "By, baby, by!" in order to gratify a nascent passion, which had yet no legitimate object wherewith to feed itself; whilst a good many gave vent to an unconscious delight in existence, and an exuberance of health and spirits, by jumping, some wildly, and without mode or measure, the mere animal exercise sufficing them; others, grotesquely, because they had vague notions of the comic; and others, accompanying their exercise with a measured clapping of the hands, or the refrain of "Hip, hop! Jemmy Dunlop!" or, "See-saw, Margery Daw!" to mark the time of their leaps; and others, regulating their saltations

by singing, "Dum de diddle," to the tune of the last organ that had assembled an audience on the village green.

One child, a grave and quiet thing, strolled up the hill, with a little book containing the alphabet, illustrated by coloured daubs of animals and birds ; but, seeing a stranger asleep, instead of sitting down to muse over her treasure, she stood still to examine him. Her attitude soon attracted the attention of some of the others, who, though they had observed somebody beneath the tree, had felt no curiosity to ascertain who it was, it being a common practice of the inhabitants to stretch themselves there at idle hours, or when they had the fumes of an extra mug of ale in their heads. As the others approached, the quiet child held up her finger to enjoin silence, an injunction which, as it involved the appearance of an exciting mystery, they obeyed, placing their feet softly on the turf, assuming an air of half comic, half serious importance, and scarcely venturing to breathe. Presently, attracted one by the other, nearly all the children who dwelt upon the green were assembled round the sleeper, still, though many of them were disposed to laugh, observing a strict

silence; but, as this state of things could not last, by and by, one more mischievous or frolicsome than the rest, shoved his neighbour, who shoved his, till the impulse being communicated to the front rank, the quiet child was pushed down, and fell directly across the person of the stranger, whereupon he opened his eyes, whilst the other children, bursting into a universal shout of laughter, ran down the hill, and took refuge within their own garden gates.

"I hope you haven't hurt yourself, my little maid," said William, as the child scrambled up, looking quite mortified and annoyed.

"No, sir," said she. "I didn't mean to do it—the others pushed me."

"Never mind!" he said, getting upon his feet; "it's time I was awake. I don't know how I came to fall asleep. Perhaps you can tell me if there's such a thing as an inn or a public-house anywhere hereabouts?"

"Yes, sir," replied the child, "there's the Greyhound, where the bowling-green is."

"And how far is it from here?"

"About half a mile; you go down that way to it."

William did not quite like the idea of a

bowling-green, as he feared it might throw him into proximity with more people than he desired, but there was no alternative. It was less dangerous than travelling along frequented roads by daylight; besides, he needed rest and refreshment, so, thanking the little girl for her information, and having learnt her name was Lucy, a piece of intelligence which procured her a halfpenny and a kiss, he turned his steps in the direction of the "Greyhound."

By this time, the other children were beginning to creep up the hill again, and when William walked away, they surrounded her, eager to know what he had been saying, but the child's notions of decorum had been so much offended by their behaviour, that instead of satisfying their curiosity, she walked silently past them, and returned home. For a few minutes, the obstreperous ones without, hooted and jeered, and pointed their fingers to the house, in the hope of provoking her to come out again; but as she took no notice of their clamour, they soon got tired of making it, and turned their minds to some other diversion.

Lucy's parents were the proprietors of the village shop; and at this time, the father had been away for some days, purchasing goods

for his little trade, at the market town; but a few hours after Lucy's interview with the stranger on the mound, he returned, and whilst he was taking some bread and cheese and a glass of beer after his journey, he fell to entertaining his wife with the news he had picked up upon his travels; and amongst other articles of intelligence, Lucy heard him say, that "everybody was talking of a murder that had been committed up north, somewhere near York, and that they were posting up handbills, describing two men that were suspected, and offering a reward for their apprehension;" adding, "that he wished he could lay his finger upon them."

This led to further inquiries on the part of Mrs. Duncan, the mother, with respect to the manner and the motives of the murder, and the persons who were supposed to have committed it.

"They are both young men," replied Mr. Duncan; "and they say it's been revenge about some girls that they were fond of. One of 'em ran away, and left his hat and pistol behind him. The other's a deserter, a good-looking chap, in a fur cap and a grey jacket."

During this conversation, Lucy sat on a

low stool, in a corner of the room, with her book in her lap, and her two large blue eyes intently fixed upon her father, eagerly drinking in the words as they dropped from his mouth, but saying nothing. When he had satisfied his appetite, the worthy man declared his intention of taking a nap, not having been in bed all night ; so, turning his wife and child out of the kitchen, he shut the door, and composed himself to sleep, whilst Mrs. Duncan went about her business in the next room, which was the shop.

About a quarter of an hour afterwards, a sudden thought struck her, and she said, " Lucy, what sort of man was that stranger you said you'd been talking to under the tree this morning, and that gave you the half-penny ?"—but on looking round for an answer, she perceived Lucy was not there, and as she had plenty of other matters to think of, the question and its motive soon passed from her mind.

In the meantime, the traveller had reached the " Greyhound," and after taking some breakfast, had gone to bed, with the intention of resting during the day, and setting out again on his journey in the evening ; but for

some reason or other, whether from that singular presentiment of evil that sometimes oppresses us, or whether his nap upon the hill had indisposed him for sleep, he could not close his eyes; so after tossing about and turning from side to side for a considerable time, and finding himself wider awake than when he lay down, he resolved to rise and go down stairs. As he apprehended no danger but that of being recognised for a deserter, he did not think he had much to fear where he was, the inn being entirely off the highway, and apparently not in the direct road to any place whatever. However, as neither his prudence nor his inclination invited him to join the company, whose voices he heard below, instead of entering the rooms whence they proceeded, he turned towards the back door, which led into a small garden adjoining the bowling-green, in one corner of which was a rude arbour with a seat and a three-legged table, where, in the summer, some customer of a romantic turn, who wished to combine rural felicity with punch, would occasionally take his glass. There, after a turn or two, William seated himself, laying his legs on the seat, the better to rest them, and there the sleep that he had

vainly courted above, soon, uninvited, visited his eyelids; and, as is generally the case when we sleep in an unusual position, he dreamed a mass of things—pleasant and sad, grotesque and terrible. His childish memories recalled visions of home scenes, and of his mother, and of the father that had ruined them; and there was his soldier life—he was now an officer, and then he was tied up to the halberds, about to undergo the degrading punishment of a criminal; and then came Lucy, who released him, but, presently, from Lucy Graham, she changed to the quiet child, to the pretty little blue-eyed Lucy of the hill; and so he dreamed and dreamed, till he was awakened by some one pulling at his arm; and when he opened his eyes, and pushed up his cap, which had fallen over them, there, indeed, stood blue-eyed Lucy beside him; the little cheeks flushed, and the eyes distended to nearly twice their natural size.

“Go away!” she said.

“Go away!” he repeated, rising from his recumbent position, and attempting to take her in his arms. “Why should I go away, my pretty maid?”

“Because you’re a wicked man,” she an-

swered, shaking herself free of his embrace; "and when father comes for his ale, he'll take you to the justice."

"What makes you think I'm wicked," said William, somewhat startled.

"Because," she replied, "you've got on a fur cap and a grey coat."

"But what harm is there in that, my dear?"

"Father says there's a wicked man has killed a gentleman, and they're trying to find him, and there's a great deal of money for anybody that 'll find him."

"And who told you I was the wicked man?"

"Nobody; but father says it's a man in a fur cap and a grey coat."

"But you know, Lucy," replied William, who, alarming as the intelligence was, was yet not insensible to the pain of being thought a wicked man by the innocent child—"you know, a great many men wear fur caps and grey coats. Why do you suppose I'm the man?"

"Because you were asleep under the tree, and you don't live here."

"You think I'm an outcast—a homeless wanderer," said William, sighing. "But it

wasn't I that killed the gentleman, I assure you, Lucy," he added, rising.

"Wasn't it?" she said, drawing nearer to him. "Then don't go away!"

"And what brought you here, Lucy? Were you sent here?"

"No," replied she; "I came of myself."

"What, to tell me to go away?"

"Yes."

"What! all the way from the Green, by yourself, on purpose to tell me to go away?"

"Yes," replied she, with perfect simplicity; "but you needn't go, as you're not the wicked man," and she took his hand affectionately in hers, as if to make amends for her past suspicions.

He lifted her in his arms, and kissing her, told her he wished he had such a Lucy; and then, by a few questions, he extracted from her the particulars she had heard from her father, and the cause of her apprehensions.

The information was very embarrassing; and the probability of escaping from all his pursuers, civil and military, seemed so very small, that for a moment he felt disposed to retrace his steps and give himself up at once, especially as the mere idea of having the sus-

picion of murder attached to his name, was extremely painful. But, on the other hand, he reflected, that if he gave himself up, he should be almost necessarily obliged to become the accuser of Leonard, a dilemma he deprecated on all accounts; and that with respect to the accusation against himself, it would probably be soon rectified by the arrest of the real criminal; and as he did not by any means despair of evading his military pursuers, it seemed a pity to sacrifice his chance by hastily throwing himself into their power.

Having arrived at this decision, it became necessary to take his immediate departure; for, according to Lucy's account, her father would not fail to come down in the course of the day to enjoy his ale and smoke his pipe; and as he would, doubtless, impart all the news he had picked up in his travels to the host, even his keeping out of sight would be no security. So having affectionately thanked his little preserver, he bade her "Good by," and returning into the house, he paid for his breakfast, and once more resumed his journey; whilst Lucy quietly returned home, and, seating herself in her usual corner with her little book of birds and beasts in her lap,

instinctively conformed to the prudent maxim of "saying nothing to nobody."

However, by and by, Mr. Duncan awoke from his nap, and after he had looked a little into his affairs, went out to chat with his neighbours, and tell them what was going on in the world, which most of them seldom or never saw; and amongst the rest, came the story of the gentleman that had been shot in the north, and the description of the men who were suspected, together with the reward offered for their apprehension.

"There was a man asleep under the tree this morning in a grey coat and a fur cap," said a youngster, called Joe Hepburn.

"What," said Mr. Duncan, "a stranger?"

"Yes," cried half a dozen young voices, "and he spoke to Lucy."

"And he went away, down that way to the 'Greyhound,'" said Joe.

"What sort of man was he?" inquired Mr. Duncan; "was he young?"

"Yes," replied the children; "he was like Tom Greyling."

"Young and good looking! That's exactly the description. And he'd a fur cap on, and a grey coat? Was it a coat or a jacket?"


"It wasn't a jacket; it was a short coat," said Joe.

"And asleep under the tree—that looks very suspicious. At what hour was this?"

"When we got up in the morning."

"I'd bet a shilling it's the very man!" said Mr. Duncan. "I'll go to the 'Greyhound' immediately, and inquire about him;" and away he went, followed by all the children in the village; but as he feared that might alarm the fugitive, and set him on his guard, he desired them to go back, an order to which they only yielded a limited obedience, satisfying their curiosity by tracking his steps a few hundred yards in the rear.

Great was the grief and consternation at the "Greyhound" when they found what a bird they had let fly; for the description of his person, together with the circumstances of his arrival and departure—not to mention several suspicious items that the imagination of the hostess furnished—fully satisfied them that their late customer was the man. However, he was gone, and there was nothing left but to pursue him, and this Mr. Duncan and several others set about without delay; but William had too much the start of them, and they all



returned after a few hours' ineffectual chase, lamenting their ill luck; and nobody more than Mr. Duncan, who had already, in his own mind, not only received, but expended the hundred pounds promised in the hand-bills, very much to his own satisfaction, having made use of it to establish himself in a very comfortable little shop that was just then to be disposed of in a neighbouring market-town. Little did he think who had been the cause of his misfortune, for Lucy's visit had never been remarked; and if it had, would have excited no suspicion.

The next best thing to do was to inform the vicar of what had occurred, who lost no time in communicating the intelligence to the magistrates, who took their measures accordingly.

All that day the door of one cottage on the green remained closed; and when inquiries were made whether anybody was ill there, Mary Lines answered that her mother was poorly, and did not wish to be disturbed.

When it was quite dark, and all around was quiet, the man in the grey coat and fur cap, who had entered it at day-break, came out, and crossing the green, turned into the lane, and disappeared by the same road he had arrived.

CHAPTER XXII.

“Chaque homme est l'esclave de ses antécédents.”

“Il est plus aisé d'être sage pour les autres que pour soi-même.”

As it was yet broad daylight, and as William considered it highly probable that Lucy's father would hear of him at the inn, and that an attempt would be made to overtake him, instead of returning to the high road, he took his course across the country for some miles, and ventured not, till it was dusk, and he thought himself at a safe distance from Hillocksgreen, to resume the more public way.

One thing much perplexed him, which was the necessity he now perceived of changing his dress, and the difficulty of doing it. The ex-

pense of purchasing other clothes was by no means convenient; but that was not the worst of it. The danger was, that whoever he applied to, to furnish him, would have seen the handbills; and being struck by his appearance, and a proceeding so suspicious, would arrest him. Indeed, it had now become perilous for him to enter any town or village in his present attire; and as he walked along, he was quite perplexed with thinking what he was to do when daylight came. His cap he might throw into a ditch, certainly, and his coat he might find means of getting rid of; but, besides that it was not agreeable to part with them till he had got others, the very circumstance of appearing without them was enough to attract attention and awaken suspicion.

Whilst he was cogitating on this subject, he was overtaken by a large covered wagon, the conductor of which, who was walking at the horses' heads, greeted him with "It's a fine night, master!" a proposition to which William having assented, the good man hazarded another, to the effect that "It was late walking;" which, meeting with the same reception, led to a third—namely, "that it was better riding nor walking," which axiom not being

disputed either, was followed by an invitation to take a lift in the wagon for a few miles. William inquired if there were any passengers within, and learning there were none, thankfully accepted the offer; and having stretched himself on some bales of cotton, was soon in a sound sleep.

He had slept some hours, when he was awakened by the stopping of the vehicle, and the sound of voices; and, peeping out, he perceived that they were at the door of a public-house, where the wagoner was watering his horses and refreshing himself. The man called out to him to know if he would take anything, but he thought it best to say 'no,' and to lie still where he was till they moved on again.

When he entered the carriage it was dark, but it was now the dawn of day, and on looking round the interior of his conveyance, he espied, lying in the corner, a wagoner's blue frock and a red waistcoat, together with some other articles, apparently the driver's provision of apparel for his journey.

There was something very tempting in the frock and waistcoat. They would be an excellent disguise; and as they were of less value than his own coat and waistcoat, he thought


he would be doing no great injury to his friend by making the exchange, if he could only accomplish it, and effect his escape without observation. At all events, it seemed worth trying, so he doffed his own attire, and put on the other, leaving a trifle in the pocket to make amends for the freedom; and then, watching his opportunity, when there was a turning in the road, he softly let himself down behind, leaping over the nearest hedge into a field, whilst the honest driver "gee-ho'd" on in perfect complacence, quite unconscious of the metamorphosis that had taken place within.

William had now nothing suspicious remaining about his attire except the fur cap, but that being an article frequently worn by wagoners, it was not very important.

Fortified by having got rid of the unpleasant consciousness that every eye that looked upon him would connect his appearance with the advertisement in the handbills, he now walked forward with more confidence, but one precaution he thought it right not to neglect, which was, to strike off at an angle from the line he had been travelling, and endeavour to reach London by some other road, lest he

should somewhere fall foul of his friend the wagoner.

Owing to this deviation from the public way, he had walked a considerable distance without finding a convenient resting-place, when he suddenly came upon a pretty little rural inn, which announced itself as "The Belton Arms," and was situated within a few hundred yards of a handsome park gate. It was a most inviting-looking spot, both within and without, a model of cleanliness, order, and neatness, insomuch, that when the traveller stepped into the passage with his wagoner's frock and dirty shoes, he felt somewhat ashamed of his appearance. However, his request for some breakfast met with a more than commonly civil response from a respectable-looking old man, who invited him into the kitchen, and gave him a seat by the fire; and as he took a place near him, and seemed disposed for conversation, William, in order to repress curiosity and anticipate inquiry, seized an early opportunity of mentioning that he was travelling south, for the purpose of applying for a situation he had heard of—a measure that seemed to produce the desired effect, as the



old gentleman asked no questions, but turned the conversation on the state of the weather, and the favourable condition of the earth for sowing corn.

Although the ride in the wagon had allowed him to enjoy both rest and sleep, so that he felt no desire to go to bed, he still found himself unwilling to quit this pretty, quiet spot, rendered doubly agreeable by cleanliness and civility, the more especially as it happened to be Sunday, and he thought he could nowhere spend the day with more propriety and comfort. He even felt greatly disposed to venture so far as to accept the host's invitation, and accompany him to a neat little church, hard by, the bells of which were ringing most persuasively. It seemed so extremely improbable that anybody there should recognise him, even if they had heard of the advertisement, under the protection of his wagoner's frock, that the peril to be incurred could hardly count against the gratification the indulgence of his inclination would afford him ; so, having cleaned his shoes and made such improvements in his toilet as his limited means permitted, he fell into the train that was proceeding churchwards.

Notwithstanding that the host was in his Sunday clothes, and really very respectably attired, and that William was in his coarse blue frock, which had little to recommend it, except that it was clean, the worthy old man, who, finding his conversation above his apparent condition, was a good deal taken by him, invited him to a seat in his pew; and it was with great satisfaction that William found himself, for the first time since he had quitted his regiment, an attendant at divine service. He was in a situation to be impressed and affected by what he heard, and from the bottom of his heart he could cry to the Lord to deliver him from his troubles.

The sincerity and earnestness of his devotions, however, besides the comfort and consolation they afforded his over-wrought spirit, produced two effects on which he had not reckoned; one was, that they completely won him the heart of the old man, and the other was, that the unconscious loudness and unction with which he uttered the responses, drew upon him the eyes of a great part of the congregation. But he was too much rapt to perceive this, and it was not until the service was over, and he had risen from his knees,

that on looking up he discovered the eyes of a young woman in a neighbouring pew, intently fixed upon his face. The blood rushed to his cheeks, for not only was her observation embarrassing to a person so critically situated, but the moment he beheld her he recognised her as a native of Eastlake, and an old acquaintance, and it was pretty evident that the recognition was mutual.

When the congregation moved, she came out of her pew, and stood at the door of the one he was in, staring at him still, but not speaking. However, though William would have been very glad to have avoided the rencontre, he thought he might perhaps risk less by avowing himself and trusting to her generosity, than by an attempt at further concealment which might pique her; so he said—“ Ah, Jessie Matthieson, who'd have thought of seeing you here !”

“ I thought it was !” she said ; “ I was sure it was you ; and yet that wagoner's frock puzzled me so, I didn't know what to think. But what in the world, William, are you doing here, dressed that figure too. Why, you haven't left being a soldier, have you ?”

"Well, but Jessie," said William, avoiding to answer her queries with respect to himself, "I think I have much more reason to ask you what you are doing here? Why, the last I heard of you was that you had drowned yourself for love!"

"No, no," replied Jessie, with a toss of the head, "I'd never no thought of drowning myself! I suppose Lucy told you that?"

"The news came from Mrs. Lawson. She said you'd gone away nobody knew where, and that people were afraid you'd drowned yourself for love of——" the squire he was going to say, but a sudden recollection stopped him.

"Of Leonard, or of the squire?" she asked.

"Of the squire, I believe," he replied.

"Ah, they thought I was jealous because he took up with Lucy Graham; and so I was at first, perhaps—like a fool as I was."

"But Lucy Graham didn't encourage him, did she?" said William, who, like most people in love, could not forbear angling for a little pleasure or a little pain. There's no class of persons so rarely capable of adhering to the prudent maxim of "letting well alone," as your true lovers; they have generally a dread-

ful propensity for speculating and trying experiments—playing with the good they have, in quest of more.

“ I don’t know as she encouraged him, but I suppose she’d no objections to it any more than other people,” said Jessie, who, being out of her troubles, was turning flighty again.

“ You mustn’t judge Lucy by yourself, Jessie,” said William, a little sharply. “ You were always giddy, you know. But you haven’t told me what you’re doing here yet?”

“ Well, I’m under housemaid at his lordship’s.”

“ What lord?” said William.

“ Why, Lord Belton that lives here, to be sure. Then you didn’t come here after me?”

“ Me! no, to be sure. What made you think that?”

“ Why, I thought mother might have heard somehow where I was?”

“ Then doesn’t she know where you are?”

“ No,” said Jessie, “ and don’t you tell her, for if you do I shall have Leonard here plaguing me; and, to tell you the truth, that was one reason I came away. He used to worry me so, and look so miserable, that I’d no comfort of my life.”

"Ah, Jessie, Jessie!" exclaimed William, "what a cruel, thoughtless girl you've been!"

"What for?" said she. "A girl isn't obliged to have a man if she don't like it, is she?—just because he plagues and worries her?"

"But you shouldn't have driven him to despair, Jessie; you should have some consideration for him; you should have thought of the consequences!"

"Oh, don't tell me!" said she, "I'm sure men don't shew much consideration to women that's fond of them! Much consideration you shewed to Jane Jackson, that was dying for you before you went to be a soldier! I'm sure I've seen the tears running down her face many a time, because you slighted her so, and was even quite rude to her sometimes, for nothing in the world but because she was fond of you, for before that you liked her well enough. It's very easy to preach to other people, indeed!"

"I dare say I didn't behave as kindly to Jane as I ought," said William; "but you know, Jessie, I'd never given her any encouragement to like me."

"Very well, she never said you had," re-

plied Jessie ; " but she couldn't help liking you, I suppose ; and, at least, as she used to say, you needn't have treated her worse than other people for it. But never mind talking about Leonard, I've got something else to think of now ; but I want to know how you came here ? Are you going to stay ? "

" No, I am going away again this afternoon. "

" But where are you going ? and what did you come for ? "

" It's a secret, Jessie, " replied William ; " but I should be very much obliged if you wouldn't tell anybody who I am, nor where I came from. "

" Well, how odd ! Is it about soldiering you've come ? "

" Perhaps it is. "

" Oh, now I know ! It's to try to get some of the tenants to enlist, and you put on that carter's frock to deceive them. "

" Well, let it be what it will, you wont mention my name, nor say anything about me, will you ? "

" But perhaps the servants 'll ask me who I was speaking to ; what shall I say ? "

"Just say it was a young man of your acquaintance; won't that satisfy them?"

"No, I don't know that it will, they're mons'ous inquisitive. But, howsever, William, if I promise not to say anything about you, you must promise not to say anything about me. Tit-for-tat, you know. I don't want to have Leonard coming here, worrying me out of my life, and looking as if he was going to be hanged!"

"There's no chance of Leonard's coming here, I'm afraid," said William, gravely.

"I'm very glad of it," said she. "What, has he taken up with somebody else?"

"No, Jessie, I'm afraid he's too fond of you, still. However, I don't know anything about Leonard myself, for I have not been to Eastlake since you left it."

"What, you're not off with Lucy, are you?"

"No, Jessie; I shall never be off with Lucy, I hope; nor she with me."

"But is the squire going on with her still?"

"No, no," said William, uncertain whether to mention Sir John's death, which he saw she was yet unacquainted with.

"What, has he taken up with somebody else? Who is it?"

"I know nothing about it," he said. "Then you've heard nothing from Eastlake?"

"No, to be sure; how should I, when they don't know where I am. But his lordship's there now, at the Castle, a visiting the squire, and perhaps I shall hear something from Joe, the groom, when he comes back."

"But wont he tell your mother where you are?"

"Who? Joe? No, no; not he, bless you! He don't know nothing about who I am, nor where I come from. Nobody knows here."

"Then I suppose it was the squire got you this place, Jessie? Was it?"

"Well, perhaps it was; but remember you're not to tell anybody. But Leonard worried me so, and I was very unhappy at Eastlake, for a great many reasons—and his lordship's a friend of his, and so he just said there was a young woman he wanted to get into a good situation—and that's all about it. But they're thinking I'd drowned myself's a good 'un, to be sure!"

By this time they had reached the park gate, and Jessie not only asked him to accom-

pany her as far as the house, but offered to shew it him, as the family was away, assuring him it was well worth seeing; but William declined the invitation, and bade her "Good by," saying he must continue his journey almost immediately. He then hastened his steps, in order to overtake the honest landlord, who had walked forward alone, on perceiving he had met with an acquaintance; and although he considered the necessity of accelerating his departure rather augmented than diminished by his rencontre with Jessie, in whose prudence or *réticence* he had not much faith, he could not resist the temptation of the old man's hospitable invitation to dine with him, a civility which the carter's frock rendered all the more flattering.

Accordingly, he soon found himself seated at a comfortable board, on which smoked a nice leg of boiled pork, garnished with pease-pudding and cabbage; and they were in the midst of discussing these savoury viands, together with the merits of the sermon, when a groom, with two fine hunters, riding one and leading the other, stopped at the door, and cried—"Halloo!"


"Bless me!" cried the host, "if there aren't

Joe and the hunters come back! I hope there's nothing wrong with his lordship!" and so saying, he rose from his seat, and went to the door, whither William anxiously followed him with his eyes, for Joe was the name of the groom that Jessie had mentioned, as being gone to Eastlake, and he could not help fearing that this unexpected return was occasioned by the misfortune that had occurred there; and, perhaps, for anything that he knew, it might be in some way connected with himself.

The gestures of the host soon satisfied him that the first part of his apprehension was not ill-founded. The groom was evidently relating the sad story, whilst the old man lifted up his hands and eyes in wonder and dismay. The colloquy continued long; the pork, and the cabbage, and the pease-pudding grew cold; and William, who had before declared his appetite in excellent condition, now found it suddenly desert him—his throat seemed dried up, and he could not swallow another morsel; and when he saw the groom ride on towards the park-gate, whilst the landlord turned to re-enter the house, he felt that his countenance accused him, and he could not have looked

worse, he thought, had he been actually guilty. Neither was this confusion by any means diminished by the demeanour of the landlord, who, instead of frankly mentioning what he had just heard, which appeared the natural course, resumed his seat silently at the table, and falling into an evident fit of abstraction, went on absently eating his cold dinner, apparently too much absorbed to discover that it *was* cold; whilst, ever and anon, an eye would be unconsciously lifted up to his visitor's face, as if he were the subject of his meditations.

Why or wherefore he could not tell, but he was convinced it was so, and that, for some reason or other, the old man's mind connected him with the catastrophe. Probably he had been traced, and the groom had described him, and mentioned that he must be somewhere thereabouts, for he scarcely thought the description of his person could be so accurate as to have awakened suspicion, in spite of his disguise, without some particularly confirmatory circumstance. Whatever might be the cause of the change in the old man's behaviour, it was not only very embarrassing, but very distressing. A few minutes before they had been in frank and free communion, pleased with



each other,—the one happy in the exercise of his homely hospitality, and the other grateful for the civility he was receiving; and now, neither seemed able to utter a word; silent and estranged they sat, the one suspicious and the other abashed.

When the old man had finished eating, William longed to rise and leave a place where, to say the least, he felt he could be no longer welcome; but confusion and uncertainty glued him to his seat. The moment of moving would be the moment of explanation—perhaps of action; perhaps his host would forbid his departure—perhaps he had desired the groom to give information that a suspicious person was in the house, and somebody would arrive shortly to arrest him.

Presently, however, the old man pushed back his chair, and rising, walked to the window; William rose, too, and took up his hat; he thought the best thing he could do was to wish him “Good day,” at once, and depart; but as he was about to do so, he recollected that he had not paid for his breakfast, so he drew out his money, and jingled it in his hand, whilst he summoned resolution to inquire what

he had to pay. At the sound of the silver, the old man turned his head, and comprehending his intentions from his attitude, he waved his hand in a deprecating manner, that said, as plainly as words, "I don't want your money."

"But my breakfast," said William.

"Nothing—there's nothing to pay," replied the host.

"I'm afraid, sir," said William, who felt too much pained to continue longer silent, "I'm afraid there's some misunderstanding—I believe you're under some mistake."

"Young man," replied the host, "you're a soldier."

William was silent, but his countenance confessed for him.

"I've been a soldier myself," said the host, "and I found you out before you'd been in the house half an hour, and I guessed you were a deserter."

"I won't attempt to deny it to you, sir," replied William.

"But I wish that may be the worst," continued the host, looking hard at him.

"It is the worst, sir," replied William, firmly, and raising his eyes confidently to his face.

"I should be glad to believe that," said the old man, somewhat more cheerily.

"You may believe it, sir," replied William; "if you'll tell me what you suspect me of, I'll be glad to clear up everything."

"Why, no," said the host; "it will be better for me to have nothing to do with that, I believe."

"Well, sir," said William, "I assure you, let it be what it will, that except deserting from my regiment, I never did a thing, in my life, that I should be ashamed to own, or that I need be afraid to shew my face for; and as for that, it was unhappiness about a young woman that led me to do it."

"Ah!" said the old man, shaking his head, "poor young hearts! Poor young hearts! We've all had our turn—we were all young once."

"If you wish me to stay——" said William, with hesitation, thinking his host might consider it his duty to stop him.

"No, no!" replied the old man; "go, in God's name, and perhaps the sooner the better. I won't stop you?"

"But I hope you believe me, sir?"

"Well, perhaps I do; I am inclined to believe

you. I liked your countenance from the first, and I was pleased with your conversation. I was always something of a reading man myself; and I liked your behaviour at church, too. Go, boy, go! and God prosper you! But get rid of that wagoner's frock as soon as you can, for everybody'll find you out. You're no more like a wagoner, my good lad, than I'm like a lord."

William was very anxious to have entered further on his justification, but this the old man would not permit, feeling that the less he knew of his affairs the better for both parties. Neither would he accept any money in payment of the entertainment, but bade him "God speed!" and dismissed him.

About half an hour afterwards, Jessie rushed, breathless, into the house, and asked for the young man that was lodging there; but the host told her he had been gone for some time, and in what direction he had departed, or whither his journey tended, he declared himself, in answer to her inquiries, perfectly ignorant.

"He came and he went," he said, "whence or whither, I know not. I never saw him before, and shall probably never see him again."

Jessie then asked him if he had heard what had happened "up north, where his lordship was staying."

The old man said, "Joe had called and mentioned it, as he passed."

"And was that young man here?" she said. "Did he hear it?"

"He didn't hear it," replied the old man, "because I spoke to Joe at the door. But there's the bell ringing for afternoon service, and I must get ready for church; so I wish you good day!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

"En general, les croyans font Dieu comme ils sont eux mêmes; les bons le font bon, les méchans le font méchant."

ROUSSEAU.

"Hinder ihm nicht, er preget zu."

"Hinder him not, he preacheth too."

"WELL," thought the traveller, as he walked away from the "Belton Arms," "if there's much evil in the world, there's much good too. Three times already I have escaped danger by the kindness of perfect strangers. But it's too much to expect that such good luck will stick by me always. I'm afraid I shall never reach London without some misfortune."

However, he walked on for some hours without meeting with any adventure that portended a fulfilment of his anticipations, when he found himself within sight of what appeared to be a

pretty large town. On this discovery, he somewhat slackened his speed; for as it was not yet dark, he doubted how far it might be prudent to submit himself in his wagoner's frock to the inspection of the discerning inhabitants, having lost all confidence in his disguise since the hint given him by the host of the "Belton Arms."

As he felt rather tired, for he had walked through a great many ploughed fields and rough roads, and as he wanted time for a little reflection, in order that he might form some plan for his future proceedings, he seated himself astride on a gate that led into a pasture, where there were some cows grazing, and two or three girls with pails, preparing to milk them. Not far off was the comfortable-looking farmhouse to which they appeared to belong; and tempest-tost as he was, it was not without envy that he contemplated what looked like the abode of peace and uniformity, and listened to the merry gibes and careless laugh of the milkmaids. In watching them, he was almost forgetting what it was so necessary he should think of, when he was recalled to himself, and the perils that encompassed him, by the sound of horses' feet close at hand; and on looking

round he saw two men approaching at a brisk trot, and one of them was in the very act of pointing at him with his whip, whilst he made some observation to his companion that evidently regarded him.

"Now," thought he, "it's all over!" and his first impulse was to jump off the gate and bolt across the field; but a second thought shewed him that such a step would be as imprudent as it would be useless, and he therefore sat still, resuming with an air of as much indifference as he could assume, an occupation in which he had been vacantly engaged before he was disturbed by the approach of the cavaliers—namely, notching a stick he had plucked out of the hedge with his pocket knife.

"Hollo, my man!" said one of the riders, as they drew up their horses opposite the gate, "have you seen a man pass this way in a grey coat and a fur cap?"

"Na', sir," said William, in as clownish a tone as he could assume, for he remembered his friend, the landlord's warning; "na', sir, I han't."

"How long have you been sitting there?"

"I can't rightly tell," he answered, still

cutting away diligently at his stick, "maybe ten minutes, or thereabouts."

"And you're sure no such person has passed in that time?"

"Not as I see'd," replied William.

By this time, however, the girls, with the prescriptive curiosity of their sex, had set down their pails, and drawn towards the gate to hear what the colloquy was about.

"You haven't seen such a person, have you?" said one of the horsemen, addressing them.

"What? who?" inquired the girls, looking first at the inquirer, then at the handsome young waggoner, and then at each other.

"A man in a grey coat and a fur cap, that was seen upon this road not long ago. He must have passed this way unless he has cut across the fields."

"There was a man called at our door and asked for a drink of milk," said one of the women; whilst her neighbour nudged her elbow and whispered, "What need of telling, poor fellow?"

"What was he dressed in? Was it a short grey coat, a buff waistcoat, and a fur cap?"

"Yes, I believe it was," replied she who had first spoken.

"And how long is this ago?"

"About half an hour."

"Is that the house he called at over there?"

"Yes, at the farm."

"Do you think he's there now?"

"No; he went away directly he'd had a drink of milk."

"And which way did he go?"

"That way," replied the girl, pointing across the fields, at a right angle to the town.

"Open the gate!" said they, eagerly.

William was about to jump off to make way for them, but the girls said there was a padlock on the gate, and it was fast, but that if they would ride back to the next field, they would find an open way that led to the farm; so, without stopping for further remark, they turned their horses' heads, and were presently seen galloping at full speed across the country in the direction the girl had indicated, whilst the damsels stood still, staring after them, wondering who the man could be, and what it was all about; the compassionate one, however, still blaming her companion for being so communicative, as she "durst say they were going after him for no good."

Meanwhile, William having assured them

he could not afford any satisfaction to their curiosity, slipped off the gate, and thinking that, under present circumstances, the town would be the best shelter he could make for, he stepped out and walked towards it as fast as he could.

In the villages he had hitherto put up at, as there was but one public-house of any mark or likelihood, he was relieved from all difficulty of selection; but in a town the case was different. There were not only good houses and bad, dirty and clean, civil and uncivil, but in a town of the size of that he was entering, there was probably a reputable and disreputable class; and, on all accounts, he was desirous of keeping clear of the latter, if possible; but it was not easy for a stranger to distinguish between them, and in his peculiar position, he had a very natural objection to inviting observation by asking questions, especially as country people are apt to require a little reciprocal information, such as—where you come from, where you are bound to, and what is the occasion of your “going to and fro upon the earth, and walking up and down upon it.”

Whilst he was discussing this difficulty in

his mind, at the same time moving forwards, because he was aware that to stand still in a street, is to draw every eye upon you, he saw a decent-looking man, with a pack upon his back, enter a house of entertainment, over the door of which was painted the figure of a gentleman in a full suit of green, who announced himself, by a scroll at his feet, as "The Green Man;" and as packmen have the best possible opportunities of judging of the eligibility of the inns on their beat, he thought he could not do better than follow his example, so he walked in after him, and whilst the packman was relieving his shoulders of their load in the passage, he advanced to the bar and inquired if he could be accommodated with a bed.

"Yes, sure," said the landlady, "you can have a very good bed here if you like. There's one as knows our beds well—how be you, Mr. Gregory? Why the sight of you 's good for sore eyes! We thought you'd forgot us this year, out and out."

"I'm somewhat later than common, sure enough," replied Gregory; "but I'm like a bad penny, Mrs. Riddle, I always comes back upon your hands sooner or later."

“ And how’s all been with you, Mr. Gregory, since we saw you this way last?”

“ Why, much of a muchness, Mrs. Riddle. Ups and downs, as folks must look for in this here world; but, on the whole, business has been pretty smartish. Cottons is looking up, and the new prints is uncommon tasty this year.”

“ That’s well!” said Mrs. Riddle. “ And now I dare say you’d like to be taking something after your walk. What shall it be?”

“ Why, I’d have no objection to a mouthful of cold meat, if you’ve got such a thing, and a draught of porter.”

“ That you shall have—best London particular—prime as ever you tasted—so if you’ll just walk into that ’ere room, Jenny ’ll bring it you in a twinkling;” and, as William here took occasion to say that he should like a bit of cold meat, and a draught of porter too, he was recommended by Mrs. Riddle to follow the packman and share his fare, as one table would do for both.

The cold beef and the porter proved exceedingly good, and as good food promotes good fellowship, the two travellers soon began to feel themselves very cosy and comfortable, as they drew close to the fire, and fell to mo-

ralizing on the affairs of the world, and discussed its news, over an inspiring glass of punch.

"These here sort of houses is an uncommon convenience to travellers," remarked Mr. Gregory, as he smacked his lips at the pleasant beverage. "There's nobody has more occasion to know 'em than I have, as is going my rounds, from one year's end to another."

"This appears to be a very good specimen," observed William. "That seems a tidy sort of woman—the landlady—too."

"A capital specimen—none better!" replied Mr. Gregory. "And as for Mrs. Riddle, there beant a honester nor a civiler 'oman 'twixt John o'Groat's house up to Lunnun."

"You must find a great difference, no doubt, in your travels."

"Difference! I b'lieve I do! Howsever, I always picks out the best in course o' time. If I arn't well off this year, I tries another next."

"Yours must be a fine situation for judging of mankind, and seeing human life," observed William; who, as we have intimated, was rather a cultivated and reflecting person for his condition.

Ay, 'deed is it," replied Mr. Gregory, nodding his head significantly. " I sees all sorts, good and bad ; and as for the ups and downs, what people calls the *wissitudes*, lord love you, you've no notion what I sees ! Why, since I've been walking the country, I've seen them as went tick for a pair of shoes to tramp in, when they left their own place to look for work, as rides to day in their carriages. And then again, many a one as I've left eating off plate, has been glad to get a plate to eat off next time I see'd 'em—that's most among the manufacturers and bankers, and such like. Then, sir, there's the unsartainty of human life—to see how death picks 'em off ! Them as I left last year healthy and strong—in the churchyard when I goes again, and nobody missing 'em. That's what strikes me, sir—there's never no vacant space ; and whether we lives or dies, the world jogs on just the same, and natur takes no account on us. People pushes on, and steps over your grave ; and the flower that's growing never stops to ax what's come o' the hand that planted it."

" Very true !" replied William ; " it's wisely ordained so, or the world would come to a stand still, or at least become too literally a

valley of tears; but each man finds it hard to reconcile when he applies it to himself."

"Why, yes," said Gregory, with a sigh, "by and by, when I drops off, another man 'll step into my beat as nat'ral as can be; and it's much if anybody thinks to ax him what's come of old Gregory."

"But on the whole," said William, "there's a great deal of good in the world; and I can't say, for my part, that I've found mankind half so bad as moralists are apt to represent them; and if they behave tolerably well to us whilst we're amongst them, we mustn't quarrel with them for forgetting us when we're gone."

"Very true, sir," replied Gregory; "that's a very just sentiment o' yourn; and in respect of mankind, I'm much o' your opinion. I'm not one o' those as is given to quarrel with human natur. Doubtless, we're not so good as we should be, but sometimes I think we're not so bad neither, as the parsons tells us we are; and to give you a bit of my mind, when I hears 'em, ofttimes of a Sunday, in some of the places of worship I goes to, it comes into my head that it's just their own pictur that they're adrawing; for I says to myself, it beant mine—that is, as far as I knows myself, and I'd rather take my

own word upon that than theirs. And it seems to me, sir, if I may be so bold as to say as much, but an ill compliment to God Almighty, to suppose he sends all us poor creturs into the world brimfull of sin and wickedness, just for the pleasure of damning us, if so be we don't make such a hard fight of it as to change our natur altogether, and shake off the burthen he's put upon us, and the devil against us into the bargain; which, considering the shortness of human life, sir—not to speak of its unsartainty, and how we're cut off many times in the middle of it, as we was saying just now—would be pretty tight work I take it, and leave a man not much time for any other business. But no doubt it answers their purpose uncommon, to persuade us of all that if they can, and set themselves twixt us and God Almighty to settle our differences. Not, sir, as I means to say I've any objection to a parson more than another man, perwided they knows themselves and keeps in their places, which they be uncommon fond o' stepping out on. No doubt it's in their power to do a great deal of good in their parishes if they please, 'specially 'mongst the poor and the ignorant;

but I can't say I see so much of that as I should like—no doubt there's some as do their duty; and so there's charitable people, and good people, in all situations of life; but when we consider, sir, that what other men, many of 'em, do for love, they're bound to do for love and money too—for it's what they're paid for—it's their business, just as mine's selling of calicoes and cotton prints—it does seem to me oftentimes they're fond of earning their bread too easy, and that they're o'er fond o' exercising their spirital mission, as they calls it, which axes nothing but gab, and to hear themselves talk—a thing most people's fond on—instead o' practising the cardinal vartues, such as mercy, and charity, and humility, and the like; which can't be done without some trouble, and keeping down of their proud stomachs, and giving up the good things o' this here life, which they tells us arn't good for nothing but to take us to a better; which is uncommon right of them to persuade people of, if they can, whilst they gets the meat, and other folks the bones."

"There's a great deal of truth in what you say, sir," observed William; "at the same

time, I've always been led to believe that the clergy are, generally speaking, a very respectable body of men."

"No doubt, sir; no doubt;" replied Mr. Gregory. "So are the merchants and the shopkeepers, and many other professions, as isn't paid for it, except in respect of its being every man's interest to keep up a decent character; and, no doubt, in respect of the outward wices, o' drinking, and swearing, and the like, the clargy's pretty free, as it's their interest so to be; but for the inward virtues o' meekness and charity, and what not, I can't say I ever see'd much on it. They're o'er fond of exalting themselves, and likes better to keep down other folks' stomachs than their own. No doubt it's easier and more agreeabler, and it's just the natural propensity of human nature, when so be they've got the bit in other folks' mouths. But all I mean to say, sir, is, axing your pardon, that if we're sent into this here world full of sin, it's past a doubt but they've got their share on it; and that with respect to their spirital mission, I wouldn't give a snap of my fingers for it; for what I hold is, sir, that they're no nearer God Almighty than I be, and that they knows no

more o' his will than any man o' plain sense may that reads his Bible, which it's their business to teach people to do, together with keeping of the poor, and tending the sick, and comforting them that's in trouble; instead o' pretending to explain what they don't understand, which makes 'em talk nonsense, and run away with strange notions; which they get so fond on, that they want to cram 'em down other people's throats, whether they will or not, puffing up their stomachs with pride, and calling themselves the interpreters o' God Almighty's word; whereas, sir, I take it, that except the poor nat'ral idiots, and such like unfort'nate creturs, as is an exception to any rule, God Almighty has sent all on us into the world, perwided with whatsoever is needful to enable us to understand what he requires on us—which, indeed, he has made plain enough, since it's only to do justice, and love mercy, and do to others as we would they should do unto us, which is just set down in so many words; and no man, sir, shall make me believe that God Almighty has made the salvation of my soul for to depend on whether I believe this, or believe t'other, that the parson tells me; when it's altogether out o' my power to

know whether he, and them that he took it from, isn't under a mistake ; more especial, as I said before, that I never see'd that they was anyways different, nor wiser, nor better than other folks ; not to mention that they can't agree about many things amongst themselves ; besides the Jews, and the Turks, and the papishers, which is of a different opinion altogether. And as for larning, sir, no man respects larning more than I do ; but I hold that larning wont teach a man nothing about t'other world nor about God Almighty, more than he's chose to shew us in his works. There we see him, sir ; there he's been pleased to make himself known to us ; and I take it, sir, that if the parsons would teach the poor people in their parishes to look for him there, they'd do more good than by talking to them about incomprehensible mysteries, as only serves to make 'em quarrelsome and conceited. For I hold, sir, as when a man looks at a blade of grass, or the feather of a bird, with the eyes of his mind, as one may say, it makes a man humble like, and lifts up his soul to his Creator, and makes the parsons' talk seem very small indeed ; not to speak o' the glorious firmament above us,

and the earth beneath, and the great ocean, as is all full o' living and creeping things."

"There I agree with you," said William. "I've read of the old covenanters, as they were called, that preached and prayed amongst the mountains, and on the hill-side. That was a grand church; and no doubt helped to keep alive the enthusiasm that sustained them through their struggles."

"Ay, sir, I've read something o' them; but there was a deal o' spiritual pride and uncharitableness amongst them, too. No, sir, the best preacher as ever I heard, was a bee, as came one day buzzing into a church, where there was some flowers—'lighting o' one and 'lighting o' t'other, labouring in his vocation, and singing his song of praise to him that made him. I forgot the preacher, to listen to him; and I went home that day the better for what I'd heard and for what I'd thought, for he made me think, sir; and I could not help pitying the parson, poor man, that stood up there, pertending to teach what he knew no more about than we did; instead o' minding the preacher what God himself had taught. No, sir, what I say is—axing your pardon for keep-

ing so much o' the talk to myself, which is o'er like the parsons, too—what I say is, let every man do what he ought, and believe what he can, and leave the rest to God Almighty. Here's to you, sir ! and I hope you'll give me your company for another glass at my expense ; for it isn't every day as I meets with such a conversable, intelligible gen'leman to crack an evening with."

We are sorry that Mr. Gregory's profession of faith did not happen to be more orthodox ; but that is his affair, not ours.

CHAPTER XXIV.


G. What fellow's this?

L. No fellow, but a very honest man.

G. Beshrew me, but his looks belie him, then."

OLD PLAY.

AT the exact moment that Mr. Gregory had brought his discourse to the crisis, with which we closed the last chapter, and before he had time to call for the proposed glass of brandy and water, the door opened, and a stranger entered the room, who, without speaking, took his seat at the table. He was a man apparently about eight-and-twenty, of a somewhat wild and evil aspect, with a great deal of red hair about his face, and dressed exactly like William, in a blue frock, and a fur cap. Immediately afterwards, the girl brought in some bread and cheese and beer, which she placed



before him, to which he silently applied himself, keeping his eyes directed to the food he was devouring with an eager appetite, and never once raising them to the faces of the company he had fallen amongst.

Whether his taciturnity was contagious, or whether there was something about him that inspired caution, certain it is, that the flow of Mr. Gregory's volubility seemed to have received a decided shock ; neither did William himself feel by any means the same sense of security, nor so much at his ease, as he had done before his entrance ; and although there was nothing remarkable in the similarity of attire, it being the costume of many of the peasants he had seen thereabouts, still he disliked it, and felt a presentiment of evil from the circumstance.

However, the brandy and water was called for and drank, accompanied by various attempts at conversation, which, notwithstanding their efforts, hung fire so exceedingly, that when the glass was finished, Mr. Gregory, who had come a long way that day, and meant to be up early on the following morning, began to feel sleepy, and declared his intention of retiring to bed ; in pursuance of which design, he

shortly afterwards arose, and bidding William "good night!" left the room, carrying his goods with him; but as he passed the bar, his purpose was arrested by a friendly invitation from Mrs. Riddle, to step in and have a chat, as she was then at leisure, and just sitting down to a comfortable bit of supper, which she recommended him to partake of. This, however, he declined, but although he declared he had had enough already, the offer of a "glass of something hot" was not so easily evaded; more especially as the hospitable hostess enforced it with the remark that Mr. Gregory was like Christmas, "as comed but once a-year."

It is perhaps unnecessary to remark, that Mr. Gregory was not exempt from that weakness which he had so profanely attributed to the clergy—namely, that he was fond of hearing himself talk; and with respect to brandy and water, although he was by no means a man given to excesses, still he had a notion that a social glass sharpened the wits and considerably heightened the zest of conversation. Thus the seductions of Mrs. Riddle, who was an exceedingly jolly person, were too much for his resolution; and shaking off his somnolency, he drew his chair to the table, and fell into

what he called *a crack* ; which, turning first upon the prices of calicoes and cotton prints, the fluctuations of trade, and so forth, led to his observing that, "for his part, he had nothing to complain of, for he had had a very pretty sale lately, and had been doing uncommon well." At which intelligence the hostess expressed her satisfaction, hinting, at the same time, that she had no doubt her guest had by this time made a comfortable bit of money, and would soon be in a condition to retire upon his fortune; an insinuation which Mr. Gregory modestly disclaimed; but by some concatenation of ideas, the observation seemed to bring to his mind the unwelcome stranger, whose inauspicious intrusion had broken up his colloquy with William; whereupon, he abruptly asked if she knew the man who had come in just now, and called for bread and cheese, an inquiry which she answered by saying that she had not observed him.

"For," said he, "I can't say as I altogether liked his appearance; and I shouldn't be o'erwilling to double up with him."

"Oh, no fears, Mr. Gregory!" replied the hostess, "nobody never comes here but what's respectable; our house is too well known for

that; and we mustn't judge folks by their looks, you know."

"That's true," replied Gregory; "but still if it's the same to you, I'd rather not be contagious with that 'ere stranger. The young man as I supped with would be more preferabler to me, if so be it puts you to no inconwenence."

"Oh! by no means, no inconvenience whatsoever," answered Mrs. Riddle. "Jenny!" she cried; but Jenny was above preparing the beds; so she stepped out, and calling her half-way down stairs, she especially charged her that Mr. Gregory was to be doubled up with the man in the blue frock.

When the hostess returned, Mr. Gregory resumed the conversation by observing, that he had been very much pleased with his companion, whom he had found a person of very superior "edication;" and Mrs. Riddle said she had liked his looks very much; but he was a stranger in those parts, and she had never seen him before.

"I've a notion," said Mr. Gregory, "that he's a gen'leman in difficulties; it strikes me as he aren't altogether what he gives himself out for. He don't wear his clothes, somehow, as if they was his own."

“What can he be?” responded Mrs. Riddle. “I wish I’d looked closer at him. I can’t say as I likes birds as is ashamed o’ their own feathers.”

“I didn’t mean to insinivate nothing agen the young man,” replied Gregory; “not by no means—quite the contrary. Many worthy folks falls into difficulties as they can’t no ways avoid; not to speak o’ the rashness o’ youth, as sometimes takes people where they never thought o’ going. By his talk, which is uncommon genteel in respect o’ grammar and the parts o’ speech, and the like o’ that, I’ve a notion he’s, may be, one o’ them players as goes about the country; or, may be, some book writer, or something o’ that sort, which I’ve heard say’s a bad trade too as well as t’other.”

“Sarve ’em right,” answered the hostess. “Who’d pay folks for going about making fools o’ themselves? and as for book larning, I never could see no good it did anybody yet. I’m sure I never had none on it; and, thank God, I’ve done pretty well without it.”

“Why that’s just as people thinks,” replied Mr. Gregory. “What’s one man’s meat’s another man’s poison. I can’t say, for my

own part, but what I've found reading a considerable consolation when I've been able to spare time for it, which aren't been so much as I could ha' wished."

"Well, every body to their taste, as the man said when he kissed his cow," responded Mrs. Riddle; "but sure there's books enough, and to spare, for everybody to read as wants; what need o' more? and, as I said afore, what's people better for 'em? Where 'ou'd I been if I'd spent my time in reading o' books, instead o' looking arter my business?"

"No doubt," replied Mr. Gregory, "as people as has got their bread to arn must look to their business first; and all things in their season's a maxim as I always upholds; and I'm not, by no means, for recommending folks to be sitting down reading, when they ought to be stirring; but it's to be considered, that there be them as ha'n't got nothing to do, I means the rich folks, and in course they must have some ockipation, if it's only to keep 'em out o' mischief; for what 'ou'd a youth do that's born to a hindependent fortin, if so be they didn't ockipy his mind with larning? He'd be as mischievous as a monkey, and as hard to manage as a bear, I take it; for it's

the larning as tames 'em. If it warn't for that, them as has got power and money 'ou'd be like so many wild beasts a overrunning of the land, and devouring on it."

"More shame for 'em!" replied Mrs. Riddle. "What right have they to so much money, when other folks ha'n't got enough to keep 'em?"

"Very true, ma'am," answered Mr. Gregory. "It's hard to say, indeed; only some folks must have it; and them as has got it, has a better right to keep it than other folks has to take it away from 'em."

"I don't know that, Mr. Gregory. Let every dog have his day, that's what I say. They've had their turn, now let other folks have theirs."

"Well, ma'am, that seems fair enough, to be sure; but what's good for the goose is good for the gander; and if so be that was the rule, nobody could never call nothin' their own, for the poor.'ou'd always be taking from the rich."

"And why not?" said Mrs. Riddle, "isn't it them as wants it?"

"Very true, ma'am; but, by the same rule, when we'd made the rich poor, it's them as ou'd want it, and they'd have a right to come and take it back again; so it 'ou'd be pull

devil, pull baker! and, as I said afore, nobody'd never have nothing they could call their own; for, you see, I might then with great propriety step in here, and say to you, Mrs. Riddle, ma'am, you've been living in this here Green Man, as your husband left you, for twenty years, as comfortable as a snail under its shell, whilst I've been a tramping about the country, without so much as a tile I could call my own; and so now it's but fair I should have a turn, and I'll thank you to turn out."

"But it's the rich folks we're a talking on, Mr. Gregory; not such as me as ha'nt got nothing more than I wants."

"Why, ma'am," replied Mr. Gregory, who was now quite in his element, "very few people, as far as I know, has got more than they wants, for wants depends on what people's been used to; them as has had little, wants little, and them as has had a great deal, wants a great deal."

"Then it's high time they larnt to do with less, that's what I say, Mr. Gregory."

"No doubt many on'em wouldn't be the worse if they did," returned Mr. Gregory; "for there's reason in roasting of eggs, and maybe they carries it too far; but, you see, ma'am, people's

apt to consider the luxuries the rich folks enjoys as injurious to the public, whereas I looks upon it in a different light, for they can't eat their money, nor put it upon their backs till the've turned it into something else, and that something else they buys from us poor folks as sells it; and so we gets our share o' the money."

"It's mons'ous little comes to the poor, as far as ever I see'd," retorted Mrs. Riddle.

"That's 'cause there's so many poor to divide it amongst," replied Mr. Gregory. "There's a great many more poor folks than rich."

"And isn't that the greatest o' shames?" replied Mrs. Riddle. "Why should a few have all the money, and the rest none?"

"'Cause, ma'am, I take it it's just the natur o' things. Some folks is clever, and some folks is careful; and some folks has luck, and others ha'n't none. Then, ma'am, you see, them as has got a little money's like folks as has reached dry land, what's got a footing, whereby it's easy to grab at what's floating by, which them as is in the water's obliged to let go, till they gets all, and t'others ha'nt nothin'; so that the Scripture's fulfilled as says,

‘to them as has much shall be given, and from them as has little shall be taken away.’ And if so be them as is in the water could get out and push t’others in, ’twould be all the same; so that it aren’t worth while, even if they could do it, which wouldn’t be so easy as some people thinks, for them as is in the water ha’n’t got no purchase on them as is high and dry. They be tossed about by the waves and the tides, and they can’t keep hold on each other, besides having enough to do to keep their heads above the stream, which, for my part, I looks upon as a providence; for if so be the poor folks could have their will, and pull down the rich, and step into their shoes, they’d be just like the poor creturs as is in Bedlam, as thinks themselves kings and queens, while they ha’n’t the sense to guide themselves no more than the beasts in the field; and they’d just set the world o’ fire, and burn themselves in the conflagration; for what is folks that ha’n’t had no edication and no experience, but children, which don’t know what’s good for ’em, and which can’t keep themselves out o’ danger if so be they’re left to themselves? And that’s why, axing your pardon, I holds to larning; for when the larning’s

more equally diwided, and the poor gets their share, the money 'll be more equally diwided too ; for a poor man as has got a good edication, thof he be in the water, he's like one as can swim a bit, and he's got a chance o' keeping his head up, and reaching the dry land ; and them that's there afore him 'll ofttimes lend him a hand to pull him up ; but it's a hard matter to help them as can't noways help themselves."

Carried away by his own eloquence, and gratified by the profound attention indicated by the silence of his auditor, Mr. Gregory had continued his harangue, of which we have given but an abstract, without pausing either for assent or approbation ; but a rather suspicious sound which caught his ear as he rounded off the last period, inducing him to turn his head, he had the mortification of perceiving that the worthy hostess was fast asleep, with her mouth open, and that the arguments and imagery which he had thought so persuasive and convincing had been wasted on impervious ears.

Gregory was by no means an ill-tempered man, but this was wounding him on his tender side ; so without condescending to awake the


lady, he snatched up his candle and indignantly retired to his room.

It was a small apartment containing two beds, one of which he perceived was already occupied; the curtains were partly drawn, and the blue blouse and other habiliments of the sleeper lay on the floor; for that he was asleep, his hard breathing and an occasional sound, something like that emitted shortly before by Mrs. Riddle, seemed satisfactorily to indicate; so Gregory undressing himself silently, stepped into bed.

As Gregory's cares were few, and his fatigues considerable, it was seldom he wasted many minutes in the process of going to sleep; but, on this occasion, he had been a little excited and a little ruffled, and the consequence was that he had turned three times in his bed before he began to give that audible evidence of slumber, which his chamber-mates generally found more convincing than agreeable. At length, however, he slept, and then for about two hours, the only sound perceptible in the room was that emitted by his own nose; for whether hopeless of emulating so distinguished an artist, or from some unascertained cause, the occupant of the other bed had declined enter-

ing into the lists, having discontinued his performance as soon as Gregory's began. But, at the end of that period, the silence was interrupted by the clang of a neighbouring church clock, which struck one, and almost immediately afterwards, a movement in the other bed, followed by a sudden gleam of phosphoric light, indicated that its occupant was awake, an indication which was shortly confirmed by his cautiously slipping out of bed, holding in his hand a very small lantern, which having placed upon the floor, he stepped softly across to the spot where Mr. Gregory's habiliments were deposited on a chair, in which, having first carried them to his own bedside, he forthwith proceeded to induct himself. His toilet concluded without interruption, he next advanced to where Gregory's pack lay, which he lifted and examined, but after some apparent deliberation, replaced where he had found it, and then, having cast a glance at the sleeper, he left the room, and stealthily descending the stairs, entered the bar, which opened by a half door into the passage. There, still fast asleep, in the very attitude in which Mr. Gregory had left her, sat Mrs. Riddle, and on the table beside her,

together with the empty glasses, the remains of the supper, and the bottle of brandy, stood a small basket, containing her keys, and about ten pounds in notes, silver, and copper, which she had extracted from the till, and placed there, as was her custom every night, with the intention of carrying it to her room. At this unexpected vision, the intruder started, and made an involuntary move towards the door, but as she did not stir, he paused, and stood still to survey her. She was certainly asleep, so he advanced cautiously to the table, and laid his hand on the brandy bottle, which he was about to raise to his lips, when the money in the basket catching his eye, he desisted from his purpose, and immediately applied himself to extracting it from amongst the keys as noiselessly as he could—an object which he effected so felicitously, that seeing there was no occasion for hurry, he ventured another essay on the brandy bottle, which having also accomplished to his perfect satisfaction, he softly retreated, and proceeded to the house door, which he found both locked and bolted; but as the key was in the lock, and he was on the right side to turn it, that circumstance caused him little inconvenience.



Fortunately, the bolts ran easy, and Jenny had only oiled the lock the preceding morning, so he let himself out without difficulty; and having drawn the door to, without venturing to close it, lest the inevitable bang should give the alarm, he buttoned the pockets of Mr. Gregory's trousers safe over the hostess' cash, and walked away much comforted.

About an hour afterwards, the fire having been some time out in the bar, Mrs. Riddle was awakened by the cold; so she opened her eyes, and by the faint light of an expiring lamp, looked about for Mr. Gregory, but the empty grate, and the burnt-out candles, inducing her to consult the clock which ticked in a corner, she perceived that it was already past two, so, with an ejaculation not very complimentary to the conversational powers of her late guest, she locked up the brandy bottle and the sugar, lighted a candle by the only lamp that yet glimmered, and seizing her basket, she emerged from her sanctum, and proceeded up stairs to finish her slumbers, an occupation in which she was very soon profoundly engaged.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Should I have wished a thing, it had been he."

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

"—— so ist dein Bett in meinem Herzen bereireitet-ver-schmähe es nicht."—BETTINE BRENTANO AN GÖTHE.

THE hint that William had received when he was sitting across the gate, which seemed clearly to intimate that his course had been traced, rendered it very desirable that he should reach London as fast as possible, he had, therefore, paid his bill before he went to bed, alleging his intention of departing very early in the morning—a design which he executed before anybody was stirring, except the sleepy Jenny. When he descended to the door, he found it ajar, but as other persons, for anything he knew, might have al-

ready left the house, the circumstance excited no observation.

The light was yet imperfect, the shops were still closed, and the streets were empty, so he walked through the town without meeting anybody, except one or two drunken revellers of the lowest class, who appeared, by their "devious ways," to have been carousing all night.

One thing he exceedingly desired to effect before he reached London, and that was a change of attire. The coarse blue frock, which formed a very good disguise in the country where it was so general, was much less desirable in London, especially as he intended, when there, to endeavour to find some occupation by which he might support himself and recruit his purse. He wrote a neat hand, and was a good accountant, and he thought that if he were only respectably dressed, he might possibly find some opportunity of making these acquirements available. Accordingly, he resolved, at the first place he reached, where there was any choice of second-hand clothes, he would provide himself with what he wanted, and this he succeeded in doing in the course of the same afternoon, by which

time he found himself within sixty miles of what he hoped would be the termination of his pilgrimage for the present.

Having provided himself with what he required, he continued his journey without misadventure, allowing but short intervals for rest, till, just as he was within sight of the smoke of the great city, a stream, running through a meadow, dotted with clumps of trees, presented itself so invitingly, that he could not resist the temptation of washing off the dust of the road in its clear waters.

Although so late in the autumn, the weather was fine and warm, and there were other disporters in the stream besides himself, but selecting a spot apart from the rest, he undressed under a tree and went in. The other parties were bathing in shallow water, but the spot he had chosen was deep, and being a good swimmer, he indulged for some time in the refreshing exercise. When he came out, he proceeded to the tree where he had left his clothes and his bundle—but, alas! displeasing was his surprise to find there, instead of his own lately-purchased fit-out, a shabby suit of ragged clothes, not of half its value, and which, when he put them on, which he was perforce

obliged to do, having no others, fitted him most ungracefully. This was an exceedingly vexatious incident in every point of view, for he had no means of replacing his loss, and his ungainly appearance, besides mortifying his vanity, would both tend to excite observation, and stand in the way of his finding employment. It was with a heavy heart, therefore, he resumed his journey, hopeless and penniless, for it is needless to mention that the pockets of the new suit were empty, and that the little money he had left had disappeared with his clothes.

On he went, however, cursing the water and his own stupidity, and ever and anon running after somebody that he saw in a black coat, in the hope that it might be *his* black coat, till he reached the suburbs of the city; and when he *had* reached them, although he had walked all that way for the express purpose of seeking shelter there, he found himself more forlorn and more shelterless, and, as he feared, from those circumstances, more exposed to danger than he had been from the beginning of his pilgrimage, for of all places on earth, London, to a penniless stranger, is about the worst. In the country, there is still some remnant of

that ancient hospitality which was formerly looked upon as the right of the wayfarer, but no such traditionary virtue exists in London, where everybody shuts their door against everybody, unless they arrive with money or recommendations. So the unfortunate traveller wandered on from street to street, and from square to square, without end or object, and only going on because he did not know where to stop, wondering when the great maze would come to a termination, and he should find himself on the other side of it. But of this there seemed no prospect; so at length, worn out, hungry and foot-weary, he stopped, and placing his back against the rails of a large house, he set himself seriously to consider whether it would not be better to deliver himself up at once as a deserter, and take his chance of being either shot or transported, than run the gauntlet through all the misery that seemed otherwise his inevitable lot, with the tolerable certainty of being taken at last, for he felt that his chances of ultimate escape were sadly diminished by his late misfortune. William had never been in London before, but he was aware that there was such a place as the Horse Guards, where all trouble of providing

for himself would soon be taken off his hands, and in his present state of hopeless depression, thither he would probably have repaired, and have announced himself to the sentries as a deserter, had he not been still deterred by the apprehension of being forced to give evidence against Leonard, whom he looked on as his brother, and whom he never doubted was the murderer of Sir John Eastlake. Rather than do this, he felt he would starve, a consummation that, under the immediate circumstances of his case, did not seem very improbable; and as he stood leaning against the rails, because he did not know where to go, whether from depression, fatigue, or inanition, he was beginning to feel tolerably indifferent whether he did or not, when a gentleman, without a groom, trotted briskly up to the door, and getting off his horse, looked about for somebody to hold him. William did not offer himself, because he had an idea that his offer would be rejected; however, seeing no one else more promising at hand, the gentleman beckoned to him, and throwing him the rein, told him he should not be a minute, and forthwith disappeared within the doors. William walked the horse up and down, wondering, the while,

whether the gentleman would give him a penny, or twopence, or threepence—he might give him sixpence—or he might give him nothing. The difference was important, but it was a considerable time before the question was decided, for a full hour elapsed before the stranger returned, during which interval he occasionally saw the face of a man, with a pen behind his ear, peeping over the dark panes of the long window, whom he shrewdly guessed had been directed to watch that he did not make off with the horse.

At length, however, the stranger came out, buttoning up the pockets of his trowsers, and looking extremely pleased; and having taken out his gloves, and deliberately put them on, he took the reins, and, mounting with a friendly nod, said, “Thank ye, my man,” and rode off.

William looked after him for a moment with some surprise, and then was just about to turn and walk away, when he observed the face of the person who had been watching him, together with that of an elderly gentleman with very grey hair, looking at him through the window and laughing. When they caught his eye they beckoned to him; so he went to the door, where he was met by the

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elder of the two, who said "Did the gentleman give you anything for holding his horse?"

"No, sir," replied William.

"I thought not," said the gentleman, pulling out half-a-crown. "There!" and he put the coin in his hand, and returned into the house.

With this unexpected subsidy, he purchased a supper and a bed; and when he quitted his lodging the next morning after breakfast, with sixpence of his half-crown left, he could not help marvelling where the next was to come from.

As before, he walked about the streets without any defined object, but merely to see, as the children say, "what God would send him;" which, as he made no effort at concealment or disguise, but such as the ill-fitting, shabby suit afforded, might with great likelihood have proved to be an arrest. But he was now in too wretched a condition to care much what became of him; and was, in fact, depressed below either the means or the inclination for precautions. But as events very generally turn out contrary to all probability, so nobody troubled him, nor took any notice of him for good or for evil, and he was obliged

to go without food that day, and save his sixpence to procure himself a bed. On the third day he earned a trifle by assisting a man to unload some goods; and on the fourth, by performing the office of waterman to a stand of hackney coaches, the official person himself having occasion to be absent. By such humble services he contrived to obtain the means of supporting life from day to day, but miserably—barely fed and wretchedly lodged—when at length it occurred to him, that if he were to lay out a few pence in buying a broom, he might make a better living by sweeping a crossing, than he was doing by these precarious jobs, which sometimes failed him altogether; so, imposing on himself a day's fast, he made his purchase; and having previously fixed upon a spot, he took up his position. As the weather was wet, and the streets dirty, he had plenty of customers, some of whom promised him a penny the next time they went that way; others paid ready money; and others walked silently across, and neither paid nor promised. However, as he shut up shop with eighteenpence in his pocket, he was well satisfied, the only thing that disturbed him being, that a man with a wooden leg, who swept the

next crossing, paid him a visit in the course of the day for the purpose of inquiring who had given him leave "to make that 'ere crossing, what was a hinjuring of him in his business." The man seemed very much disposed for a brawl, but William tried to appease him with civil words, and flattered himself he had succeeded, as he went away without coming to an open quarrel. But the next day he attacked him again with increased violence, swearing, with many oaths, that he should not stay there to "knock up his crossing, what wasn't half so adwantageous as before he came."

William did not like to give way, both from the natural pride of a man, and because he apprehended that wherever he attempted to establish himself, he should probably encounter the same opposition; so that by his perseverance, matters came at length to an open feud, which was only prevented from becoming a fight by his forbearance.

This state of affairs had continued for several weeks, when, one evening, just as he was preparing to quit his station, he was attracted by the sound of a woman's voice who was singing, "Here awa, there awa, wandering

Willie," accompanied by a violin. The tones were beautiful—sweet and clear, and without any of the nasal twang of street singers in general. The song was familiar to him—it was one of Peggy's favourites—and so indeed seemed the voice; he would have almost said it was hers, but that the style was more polished. There were several persons standing round, listening to the music, and he was pushing in amongst them in order to obtain a view of the singer, when he suddenly felt himself struck in the side; and on clapping his hand to the part, he had just time and consciousness to be aware that he was stabbed by a knife, which the assassin had left in the wound, before he fell to the ground, not so entirely bereft of perception, however, as not to be sensible that he had attracted the notice of the bystanders, and he endeavoured, though in vain, to tell them where to carry him, but he could not speak, although he heard many voices, and the word *hospital* frequently repeated. Then a familiar voice fell upon his ear, and the lips of the speaker seemed close to his face—presently afterwards he felt himself lifted from the ground, and then, from the pain of his wound, he fainted and knew no more.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Good God, how sweet are all things here!
How beautiful the fields appear!
How cleanly do we feed and lie!
Lord, what good hours do we keep!
How quietly we sleep!
What peace, what unanimity!
How innocent from the lewd fashion,
Is all our business, all our recreation!

"Oh, how happy here's our leisure!
Oh, how innocent our pleasure!
Oh, ye valleys! oh, ye mountains!
Oh, ye groves and crystal fountains!
How I love, at liberty,
By turns to come and visit ye."

COTTON.

OF course the arrival of the new possessors of Eastlake Castle was an event eagerly looked for by the village, and anticipated with great

interest and curiosity by the tenantry of all grades. The character of the new comers was a matter of no small importance to them; and as everybody is a physiognomist after his own fashion, whether he has read Lavater or not, each was anxious to form his opinion of what was to be expected, from the evidence of his own senses. On the evening, therefore, that the family were expected, the whole neighbourhood turned out, and assembled near the park gate, which opened on the London road, to await their arrival. They knew nothing whatever of the persons they were looking for, except that they were to be the future dwellers in the Castle. Some of the elderly people remembered, that in the time of the "Old Squire," as they were wont to call Sir John's father, Master Marmaduke Rivers had lived there for a short time; but he was then but a boy, and they had seen little of him, and thought less. His ever inheriting the estate had appeared then too remote and improbable an event to invest him with the slightest interest in their eyes; and since that period, they had never so much as heard his name mentioned. Indeed, unless in any private conversations between Nelly and her mistress,

it never *was* mentioned. The late Sir John, who had not seen Marmaduke since he was himself a child of five years old, and had therefore scarcely any recollection of his residence at Eastlake, had been taught by his mother, who represented him as seeking by every means that were available, just or unjust, to possess himself of a property he had no right to, to entertain a very ill opinion of him; and he was too much under her influence, and too careless, to investigate the truth of her allegations, or ascertain the foundation of her aversion. Mr. Rivers had never made the slightest advance towards an acquaintance with his wealthy cousin, nor had he ever made any application for assistance. Lady Eastlake was aware that he had dissipated his own fortune, as well as his wife's, and that he was a ruined man; but she did not know where he was, and she never mentioned either himself or his circumstances to her son, who, on his part, never inquired about either. She was conscious that, had Sir John been acquainted with the fact that so near a connexion was almost a beggar, he would have volunteered his assistance, for he was good-natured, generous, and forgiving, though too thoughtless to

reflect on what was not immediately presented to his notice; and she being of a much less placable temper, and having from the first hour she ever saw him imbibed a strong aversion to Marmaduke—partly because she had disliked his mother, and partly because her husband had brought him to Eastlake in opposition to her wishes—had no desire that his embarrassments should be diminished, she and Nelly having made up their minds, according to their own notions of retributive justice, that it was quite right he should suffer for his ingratitude.

Thus, the name of Marmaduke Rivers was never mentioned, and almost forgotten at Eastlake; and in proportion to the oblivion in which it had sunk, was the interest and curiosity it now awakened. Every recollection was industriously raked up, and every conjecture and report eagerly listened to. The elderly people contrived to call to mind that he had been a very handsome boy, though whether he was fair or dark, or had black eyes or blue, they could not by any possibility agree amongst themselves. There was also a vague notion that Lady Eastlake had never liked him, but that the old squire had, and

they remembered to have heard of the law-suit. There were besides some floating rumours, founded on nobody knew what, that he had played and lost a great deal of money; but this required confirmation, for it did not appear clear that he had ever had a great deal to lose; especially as the elders, who recollected Miss Eastlake, the old squire's sister, were aware that she had married a "soldier officer," who had nothing to recommend him but his handsome person and his red coat.

On this small provision of facts and reports, the curious villagers were obliged to exist, till the family arrived to furnish them with something more substantial; but as they stood about the road awaiting the grand advent, they made the most of what they had, discussing the matter under every form and point of view. The old moralized on the ups and downs of life, and the uncertainty of human affairs; not failing to observe, with some complacency, on the frequency with which death overtook the young, the healthy, and the vigorous, passing by those whose right to precedence on the score of years was unquestionable; and old Betty Grimes declared it to be her fixed

opinion, that age was no rule at all, and had nothing whatever to do with people's dying.

Whilst the old were thus moralizing on passing events, the young were jesting on the same theme; and amongst other expedients for creating merriment, and raising a laugh, the wags of the hamlet called out, when they saw Farmer Lock's tax-cart coming down the hill, with his jolly wife in it, driving the grey pony, "Here they be!" The joke was repeated on the appearance of Farmer Tolman's hind driving some pigs home from market; and a third time, on the approach of an old yellow rickety post-chaise, with a shabby pair of horses, and the driver riding on the bar, because, as he complained, there were four insides, besides the luggage.

"No, but I say, here they be, though, in real earnest!" cried one of the rustic wits, who had first caught sight of the vehicle. The gravity of his tone was quite successful; every head was eagerly turned to see the splendid equipage they were expecting; and loud, long, and boisterous was the laugh as the crazy vehicle came nodding down the hill, towards them, and made its way through a lane of

grinning, jeering faces. But what was their amazement when this strange apparition actually stopped at the park gate! Every mouth was closed, as if by a touch of harlequin's wand.

"It is!"

"It aren't!"

"It can't be, no how!"

"It's the servants, I tell you!"

"Servants! They be pretty ones, then!"

The gate was opened, the gate-keeper bobbed a half curtsy, quite uncertain whether she was doing too much or too little—it was more than the equipage could claim, though less than was due to the squire or his representatives; but in the meantime, it was a precautionary measure—a little civility could do no harm. The perplexed villagers were at a loss how to proceed; they didn't know whether to follow the chaise up to the house, or not. It seemed impossible, but if this really were any part of the family, their behaviour had been dreadful—their merriment positively insulting; on the other hand, their pursuing the carriage, if its contents proved to be what is called *nobody*, would be absurd, and might be the means of their missing the opportunity of bestowing the

flattering reception, for the purpose of which they had assembled, on the real great people.

However, a few turned in after the chaise, and then more followed, at first keeping at some distance behind, and afterwards running to get up to the half-despised, half-respected, suspicious, perplexing vehicle; whilst those on the outside, who, being more firm in their convictions, had resolved not to lose the real spectacle for the sake of such a miserable counterfeit, called their comrades who had gone in, *flats*.

By and by, amongst those who were pursuing the chaise, somebody who enjoyed a more experimental turn of mind than the rest, hazarded a small—a very small, “Hooray!” on hearing which, two or three adventurous persons, chiefly boys, raised a feeble chorus, something after the manner of a fugue; whereupon, the glasses of the chaise, which had been partly down, were quickly drawn up.

“I say, if they beant going to the front door, though!” said one of the rustics.

“They be, surely!” said another—“Hooray!”

“Hooray!” cried several other voices. Still, however, a tone of doubt was very perceptible, till the carriage drove round the sweep, and

drew up at the great hall-door; and then, the chorus became somewhat more solid and simultaneous. The noise they made, together with the accompaniment of the hall bell, which the postilion had rung, brought out the servants, who, most of them being anxious to retain their places under the new dynasty, rushed to the door in a state of enthusiasm; but at sight of the decrepit yellow chaise, they stopped short, aghast; whereupon, the "*vivas*" of the rustics stopped, too. They began, once more, to suspect they were all wrong. However, after a moment's doubt and hesitation, for he inclined to think the postilion had made some mistake, Burton stepped forward to the carriage.

"Is there no one to open the door?" said Caroline Rivers, in a tone of displeased surprise, as she looked from the window.

The servants saw their error immediately, and with an alacrity proportioned to their previous tardiness, they handed out the ladies, and conducted them to the drawing-room, where the fires were blazing in the grates, and vases of beautiful hot-house flowers blooming on the tables.

"Oh, what a contrast!" cried Caroline, clasping her hands in ecstasy.

"It's like anything in a fairy tale," said Ellen. "Surely nobody before, in real life, ever experienced such strange vicissitudes."

"If dear papa were but here to enjoy it with us?" exclaimed Mary.

"He will, soon," said Caroline.

"Mamma, you don't seem a bit happy," said Ellen, playfully shaking her mamma's arm. "You look just as you used to do in Mrs. Wood's lodging."

"Do I, my love? I believe I'm tired."

"Well, but isn't this charming?" said Caroline.

"Doesn't it strike you as very like Lord Wharton's, Caroline?" said Ellen.

"These rooms have some resemblance to the rooms at Carrington, but I think this park a great deal more beautiful."

"Oh, for sweet odours, again!" cried Mary. "How delightful the perfume of that verbena is?"

"And what lovely balsams!" said Ellen.

"Oh, Ellen, look at the view from this window!" cried Caroline, from the back

drawing-room. "How rich! — how beautiful!"

"It's like West Vale," said Ellen.

"Oh, mamma, come and look at this view!" cried Mary.

"It is beautiful," said Mrs. Rivers, gravely.

"I'm sure, mamma, you're rehearsing the part of a stoic, or a cynic, or something of that sort," said Caroline.

"My dear child!" said Mrs. Rivers, "I have had too much experience of the vicissitudes of human life, and the insecurity of fortune, to be elated by any reverse, however favourable."

"But you might enjoy it reasonably, mamma, without being elated."


"I wonder when dear papa will come," said Mary. "Do you think he'll be here soon, mamma?"

This question had already been asked very often by the anxious girls, but it was one Mrs. Rivers could not answer. All she knew of her husband was, that he was, or had been, at Liverpool, because from thence she had received a letter saying, that the papers having reported that Sir John Eastlake was dead, she had better inquire into the truth of the rumour, and

if it proved to be correct, she had only to apply to Mr. Brockley, the solicitor, and he would supply her with what money she wanted. He recommended her also to go down immediately she received any notice of the event from Eastlake, leaving a proper interval, however, for Lady Eastlake to remove.

This letter was brought her by Elias, and on the same day Mr. Russell called to confirm it, and also Mr. Brockley, who, by the aid of Harriett, had traced them to the widow's house. He had received notice of the event from Eastlake, and it was he who communicated the particulars of the catastrophe, to which Mr. Rivers had made no allusion.

The effect of this intelligence on the parties concerned was very various. On the young ladies it produced unmitigated delight; Elias was delighted too, although there was a slight tinge of regret, when he considered that they would be for ever removed from his sphere; but Mary, who perceived this, cheered him by saying, "You'll come and see us at Eastlake, Mr. Elias"—for she had found out that he liked to be called so; and although it seemed difficult to believe he ever should enjoy such a consummation of happiness, the kindness of



the suggestion was very comforting. Mr. Russell was very glad and very sorry. He rejoiced in their good fortune most sincerely, but it was the destruction of all his hopes. In their former prosperity he had never ventured to avail himself of the opportunities that offered to make an acquaintance; in their adversity he had come boldly forward, and he was only waiting till he could see some prospect of being able to support a wife, to make his proposals to Caroline, on whose heart, although he had never ventured to broach the subject of love, he flattered himself he had made some impression; but not having declared his intentions whilst they were poor, he felt he could never do it now they were rich; and therefore, having congratulated them, and offered his services in any way that could be useful or acceptable, he fell somewhat into the rear. Mr. Brockley was all deference, politeness and liberality; but as they had not been pleased with his former behaviour, they received his assiduities coolly, and accepted as little from him as they could; and as the letters from Eastlake brought the intelligence that Lady Eastlake had removed the day after the funeral, and that everything was ready to

receive the family as soon as they pleased to come, they left London with as little delay as decency permitted.

Mr. Brockley wanted to buy them a carriage, and all sorts of things; but Mrs. Rivers would accept of nothing more than was absolutely necessary to pay their small debts and their journey. She declined seeing any of her former friends, who, through Mr. Brockley and Mr. Russell, offered their civilities and congratulations; and she was evidently extremely anxious to meet her husband. Far, indeed, from being elated by her restoration to affluence, she was evidently oppressed by a weight of care and uneasiness. She was restless and *abattue*; and the delight of her children appeared rather to annoy than please her.

It was not long, however, before she received a letter from her husband, dated London, whither he had gone, he said, to make some necessary purchases; and shortly afterwards, to the great satisfaction of his family, he arrived at Eastlake.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"I cannot change as others do,
Though you unjustly scorn ;
Since that poor swain that sighs for you,
For you alone was born."

LOED ROCHESTER.

"I
Hunted your sacred life, which that I miss'd,
Was the propitious error of my fate,
Not of my soul."

DON SEBASTIAN.

IN spite of all the evidence against Leonard—evidence though only circumstantial, yet extremely convincing—Lady Eastlake and Nelly continued firm in their persuasion of the guilt of Marmaduke Rivers. Their prejudices pointed all in that direction; and they now freely admitted to each other that they had always had a misgiving that some evil would befall, or, at

least, be attempted against, Sir John from that quarter. Their suspicions, however, were not shared by others. The Grahams, father, mother, and daughter, believed firmly in the guilt of Leonard, although Hannah never admitted as much, even to her own family; whilst the magistrates and the public were divided, or undecided; some being of opinion that William, and some that Leonard, was the criminal; others feeling confident that it was one or the other, but unable to determine which; whilst a fourth party stoutly maintained, that it was quite evident by their both being at such an out-of-the-way place on that particular day, that they had acted in collusion; for that Leonard had been there was quite clear, the hat found being recognised as the one he had worn at Calderwood.

It may be supposed, that betwixt this perplexing subject and the sayings and doings of the new owners of the Castle, the worthy inhabitants of Eastlake had enough to occupy their minds; and never-ending were the discussions, and the conjectures, and the gossip. However, one evening an event happened, quite unexpectedly, which, if it did not dispel the cloud of mystery that hung over the

lamentable catastrophe that had occurred, at least had the effect of removing one element of obscurity.

This was the return of Leonard Graham, who arrived one night at his father's house, weary, worn, and sick, but a voluntary visitor. He lifted the latch and walked in, just as they were sitting over their fire-side, perplexing their minds with conjectures of what had become of him. The moment she saw him, his mother felt an intuitive conviction of his innocence, and she rushed to his arms with a joyful cry, whilst Lucy, pale and amazed, sat fixed to her chair, gazing at him without knowing what to think, and the old man, equally confounded, rose, with trembling knees, supporting himself by the table, and stared at him, unable to speak from emotion.

"God be praised!" said Hannah, pressing him in her arms, and kissing his wan face with all a mother's fondness. "I knew it wasn't him; and now he's come back to clear himself."

"Speak, boy!" said Geordie, with quivering lips, "was it you that did the dreadful deed or not?"

“It wasn’t me,” said Leonard. “I did not do it, thank God!”

The old man lifted up his hands and eyes to heaven, whilst the joy of Hannah knew no bounds. It was an inexpressible relief to Lucy, too, to learn that her brother was innocent, but her satisfaction was not unmixed. Her anxiety for William, which, convinced as she was of his freedom from any participation in the crime, had been in a great degree superseded by that she felt for Leonard, now returned with redoubled force, for she foresaw that, to the minds of people in general, the acquittal of one would be the condemnation of the other.

“What in God’s name, then, has kept you away from us all this time, lad?” said Geordie.

Leonard was silent a minute, and then he answered—“Why, father, I was afraid to come back after the murder, for I was there when Sir John was shot.”

“You were!” exclaimed Geordie.

“Then you know who did it?” said Lucy, eagerly.

“No, I don’t,” replied Leonard; “I saw the man, but not his face.”

"How unfortunate!" exclaimed Lucy.

"Tell us what brought you there, lad?" said Geordie.

"Well, father," replied the young man, "you know I went away to try and find out whether it was Jessie that had been living with the squire at Hillside or not."

"And was it?" inquired Lucy, interrupting him.

"I don't know," answered Leonard. "I couldn't get anything out of Mr. Groves about it, though I tried him several times. Sometimes he said one thing, and sometimes another—but for that reason I thought it was her. If it had not, I think he would have said *no*, at once."

"I dare say it was her," replied Geordie. "I always thought so!"

"And yet, I don't know," said Leonard, whose heart could not burst the bonds that had entwined it, "sometimes I think it was not, and that he was only amusing himself by teasing me."

"He wouldn't answer Mrs. Matthieson one way or the other, either," said Lucy.

"Well, go on, lad, and tell us what is of

more consequence. What brought you to the Four Stones just at that fatal moment?"

"Why, it was exactly that. It was because Mr. Groves wouldn't give me any satisfaction, and so I resolved to ask Sir John himself."

"Goodness, Leonard!" exclaimed Hannah, "what a rash thing to do!"

"Not at all," said the old man. "I see no harm in that whatever."

"Nor I," added Lucy. "I think he was very right."

"Then you were coming home through the wood when Sir John was shot?" said Geordie.

"I came through the wood," replied Leonard, "because I had heard at Calderwood that *he* meant to do so. I set off early in the morning, and watched till I saw him coming; but as Mr. Groves was with him, I didn't like to speak, so I hid myself amongst the trees, and followed him by the report of his gun. By and bye, just as I had given it up for that day, I saw Mr. Groves pass me, and go towards Martin's farm. He passed close to me, but I don't think he saw me, so then I set off to try to overtake the squire."

"Did you see me, Leonard?" asked Lucy.

"To be sure I did!" replied he. "When I came near the Four Stones, I heard your voice and his quite plain, and I could hear that you were begging him to let you go, and when I got up to the wall, I took off my hat, and stooped down to peep over and see what he was doing. Do you remember, the dogs growled?"

"Yes," said Lucy. "Was that at you?"

"Well, go on!" said the father.

"Just then you knelt down, begging him to let you away," continued Leonard, turning pale at the recollection.

"And it was at that moment he was shot," said Lucy.

"Yes," replied the young man, with evident feelings of horror, "it was just at that very moment!"

"And where was the person that shot him?" asked Lucy.

"He must have been behind a tree, not far from me," answered Leonard. "I had heard a slight rustle just before, but I thought it was a bird."

"But why did you fly, Leonard?" said Lucy, "and leave me there in such a dreadful situation?"

"Didn't you try to seize the villain?" said Geordie.

"No," replied Leonard, with some confusion, "I hurried away from the spot as fast as I could."

"Leonard never was good at facing anything of that sort," observed Hannah.

"But you did wrong, lad," said Geordie. "It was a coward-like act to run away, and neither help your sister nor pursue the murderer."

"I was afraid of being suspected myself," said Leonard.

"Then you should have caught the villain. Running away was the sure way to be suspected."

"And you *are* suspected!" said Lucy. "I wonder you were not taken up by somebody on the road."

"It was for fear of that, that I got upon the outside of a coach and came home directly I heard they were seeking me."

"Where were you?" inquired Lucy.

"On the road to Hillside."

"But, Leonard, what were you doing with a pistol?" inquired Geordie.

"A pistol!" said Leonard, turning pale again.

"Ay," replied the old man, "you left your hat and a pistol behind you at the Four Stones! Where did you get the pistol?"

"I borrowed it of Dale, the miller, at Calderwood. Where was it found?"

"Behind the wall with your hat. What did you want it for?" said the old man, looking sternly at him.

Leonard paused a moment, and then he said, "It was to shoot the squire, if he wouldn't satisfy me about Jessie.

"I was afraid so!" said Geordie, shaking his head.

"But he didn't shoot him, thank God!" said Hannah.

"But he's guilty of having contrived his death," returned Geordie. "He's guilty in the sight of the Lord."

"But why did you leave your pistol behind? That was very careless?" said Hannah.

"I was so terrified I didn't know what I was doing," replied Leonard. "For the truth is, I had taken off my hat and drawn the pistol from my pocket to shoot him, at the very moment I heard the report and saw him fall. I was so enraged at his behaviour to my

sister, that I was just going to draw the trigger. Where is the pistol now?"

"The magistrates have it; and you must go and give yourself up to-morrow morning, and tell your story. Please God, they may believe you," said Geordie.

"But," said Lucy, "you say you saw the man's back, though you didn't see his face: what sort of man was he?"

"Why," said Leonard, "when I'd got a little way, the terror got the better of me, and I was near fainting. I couldn't keep upon my legs, and I was obliged to sit down and lean my back against a tree; and I believe I sat there some time with my eyes shut, betwixt dead and alive, till I was startled by hearing, as I thought, somebody stir near me. I got upon my feet as quick as I could, and was just in time to catch a glimpse of the fellow making off as fast as his legs could carry him."

"And what like was he?" said Geordie.

"He was a fellow about my size," answered Leonard, "dressed in a grey jacket and fur cap."

"That wasn't him," said Lucy.

"What makes you think that was the man that shot the squire?" asked Geordie.

"From the way he ran," replied Leonard. "It was plain he was trying to make his escape."

"That was not him," said Lucy; "that was William Bell."

"William Bell!—was he there?"

To account for William Bell's presence, Lucy then related her branch of the story, which when he had heard, left Leonard exceedingly perplexed. In spite of all she could say, he could not help believing that William was the assassin. His provocation was great, and his temper hasty; and although his being a deserter was reason enough for his flying, it was no reason he should not have spoken to him.

"Perhaps he never saw you, or didn't know you," said Lucy.

"I'm positive he must," replied Leonard. "I'm quite sure that whilst I was sitting there in that half fainting way, that he had been standing close to me. He wasn't three yards off when I saw him, but he plunged into the thicket, and I lost sight of him in a moment."

This circumstance, strange as it was, did not shake Lucy's faith with respect to William's innocence in the slightest degree, nor had it much effect on Geordie's; for the old man liked William, and his good opinion of him was not to be easily disturbed; but Hannah professed herself thoroughly satisfied of his criminality, and declared she had always thought it was he that did it from the first. People are so willing to believe in the guilt of those they do not like, and so ready to excuse and exonerate those they do, that Hannah's prejudiced judgment is by no means an uncommon instance. Many a cruel injustice is committed, and many an innocent person made to suffer, on no better foundation.

On the following morning, with the earliest dawn of light, Geordie set out with his son to seek the magistrates, eager to anticipate the rumours that might get abroad of his return, lest they should send to apprehend him, and the favourable circumstance of his voluntary surrender be thus flung away.

They were, however, in time to prevent this misfortune: and to Mr. Dimond and Mr. Goring, Leonard repeated all the circumstances above narrated, not omitting even his own

criminal intentions, which, by his father's advice, he candidly avowed. Their interrogations also extracted from him an account of the situation in which he had seen William, the effect of which disclosure was extremely unfavourable to the deserter—his not speaking to Leonard, but on the contrary, seeking to avoid his observation, having a very suspicious appearance.

Leonard's account of himself and his motives, bore a stamp of truth that brought perfect conviction to the minds of the magistrates, who, however, thought it proper to detain him till they had made a few further inquiries, and ascertained some corroborative circumstances. Amongst these was the borrowing of the pistol, for the purpose of verifying which they sent to Calderwood, and apprehended the young man called Dale, who was the son of a miller there.

Dale admitted, at once, that he had lent the pistol to Leonard Graham, who had asked him for it under the pretence that he was going to fire at a mark, with some other young men, for a bet. He had also loaded it for him, and given him a couple more charges, which he had put into his pocket. These charges, on being asked for them, Leonard

produced; they had lain in his waistcoat pocket ever since. Dale, on being asked why he had not voluntarily come forward, and avowed that he had lent the pistol, said he had refrained, from the fear of injuring Leonard.

The charge, which had been drawn from the pistol, was then produced, and Dale recognised it to be the one he had himself put in; the paper with which he had rammed it down, being part of a memorandum of the quantity of corn brought to the mill that week, written by his own hand.

This circumstance was thought so conclusive, that Leonard's further detention was deemed unnecessary. His father and a neighbour became bound for his appearance whenever his testimony might be required, and he was, in the meantime, discharged.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"He was my comfort, and his mother's joy,
 The very arm that did hold up our house ;
 Our hopes were stored up in him—
 None but a damned murderer could hate him.

.
 Well, heaven is heaven still ;
 And there is Nemesis, and furies,
 And things called whips ;
 And they do sometimes meet with murderers,—
 They do not ALWAYS 'SCAPE—that's some comfort."

SPANISH TRAGEDY.

AFTER the arrival of Mr. Rivers, it was evident that his wife's spirits rose considerably ; and she began to interest herself in the arrangements of her new residence, and enjoy its beauties, neither of which she had done before. But it was equally evident that the mind of the husband was far from being at ease ; the weight of care from which she was relieved,

seemed to have transferred itself to his shoulders; and although he had sworn to give up play, and seemed in a fair way of keeping his word, he was almost as silent and abstracted as when he was nightly risking his all upon the turn of a die. In addition to this, there was a sort of nervous tremor about him that was quite observable, and which he had never betrayed before; for he had a good deal of hope, and had always been less shaken by his losses than most men would, who staked so high. He was naturally rather sanguine, and had trusted very much to the chances that the chapter of accidents, to which he frequently referred, was to unfold; and the particular chapter to which he alluded, his wife was well aware was that which contained the death of his cousin. Mrs. Rivers had always endeavoured to counteract this tendency to rely on so improbable an event; more especially improbable, as the baronet, besides being in the full enjoyment of health, was by several years the youngest man of the two; but Mr. Rivers shared, with a large proportion of mankind, the delusion of "thinking all men mortal but himself," and his persuasion that he should live to be the possessor of Eastlake was immovable.

And now Eastlake was his ; but, like many other much desired goods, it seemed to have brought no happiness with it. Everybody saw this, and everybody accounted for it after his or her own fashion. His wife and daughters, as well as several other persons, attributed his depression to mortification at the degradations he had suffered, and this was the cause he himself assigned to his family ; others were persuaded that he was suffering from the want of his usual excitement ! How can a man who has passed all his nights at the hazard table, be content with the quiet domestic life he is leading now, with no society but his country neighbours ? But there were two persons who entertained a very different theory on the subject, and this was Lady Eastlake and Nelly. Every word of gossip that was afloat about the inmates of the Castle, Nelly eagerly gathered up and carried to her lady ; and let it be of what nature it would, it all tended to the one conviction in their minds. “ It’s the conscience of him, dear,” Nelly would say, “ that’s preying upon his vitals ; but the Lord’ll uncover the wickedness yet, that’s hid in his heart, and we shall see him hanging as high as Haman, before we die !” But when she looked in her

mistress's face, her heart sometimes misgave her that *she* would never live to see that desired consummation.

Lady Eastlake's sufferings were intense, but they were concentrated and silent; she never gave vent to her feelings in words or tears, except in the presence of Nelly; but her grief, which was fiery, preyed upon her heart and consumed it; and she looked as she felt, as if all the healthy juices of her body were dried up, and as if she were withering away like fuel in the flame. Had her son died a natural death, deep, deep would have been her affliction, and pungent her self-reproach; but perishing as he did, every source of aggravation was added to her sorrows, every element of bitterness to her cup.

In most cases an accidental death is infinitely more distressing to the survivors than a natural one; for the idea that the catastrophe might have been avoided is a cruel augmentation of misery; and a violent death, where resentment, amazement, and horror, are super-added, is inexpressibly more painful; but in Lady Eastlake's instance, the case was still worse. She believed not only that her son had died by the hand, or at least through the

instigation of a person against whom she had long nourished an intense hatred, and against whom she always averred, that, from the first moment she beheld him, she had conceived an instinctive one; but she felt that if she had not, for her own selfish ends, prevented Sir John's marrying, there would, in all probability, in that quarter, have been no motive for the murder; and he might have lived happy himself, and blessing her, for years to come. And as if this were not enough, the assassin, unpunished and unsuspected, had quietly stepped into his possessions, and was daily and hourly uninterruptedly revelling in the fruits of his crime; and she could get no one to listen to her presumptions, nor countenance her suspicions; and until she had some proof to bring forward, she was compelled to silence, and dare not even give utterance to her thoughts, except to Nelly. With Nelly she made herself amends, to be sure, as far as talking went; whilst Nelly, whose hatred and resentment equalled her mistress's, comforted *herself* by letting fly hints and inuendos which, though, being aimed by the weak against the strong, they produced no apparent mischief, were yet not altogether without their effect.

But Lady Eastlake was resolved that this impunity should not last ; and it was with the determination of detecting what everybody else seemed resolved not to detect, that she had fixed herself in the close neighbourhood of the man she hated. His wealth and his rank would protect him from the suspicions of the world ; and if she quitted the spot, there would be nobody left who had any particular motive for pursuing the inquiry. The eyes of justice had never glanced at him ; they were turned wholly and obstinately in another direction ; and if the deserter remained undiscovered, or being discovered, if he could not find sufficient evidence to establish his innocence, no other criminal would be sought for.

That he *was* innocent she was persuaded, not only because she was strong in her own suspicions, but also because in a long and private examination of Lucy Graham, she had fully satisfied herself that the girl's relation of the facts was genuine, and her conviction of her lover's innocence firm and well founded.

"I wouldn't say I thought him guilty, even if I did think so, that I own," she said ; "but if I was not sure of his innocence, I couldn't speak as I do now. But I'm as sure of it as I am of my own. He couldn't have deceived

me—besides, he wouldn't have tried ; perhaps he'd have reproached me bitterly for being the cause of it, but still he'd have confessed it. But no one who had seen his looks, and heard the way he spoke, could have believed him guilty. It must have been a man long practised in murder, who could have behaved as he did, after just committing one ; and William couldn't kill a mouse without shuddering. He was always just as soft-hearted as a woman about anything of that sort. Oh, no ! my lady ; if William was guilty, I should have known it, and you would see that the knowledge was in me, as I should have seen the guilt in him."

And Lady Eastlake thoroughly believed it. She had also gathered from Mr. Craven, the Eastlake attorney, before she left the Castle, that Mr. Rivers had been some time absent from his family, and that they did not know exactly where he was ; and she had learnt from Mr. Brockley, the London agent, that he had found Mrs. Rivers and her children living in a mean lodging, and apparently in a state of abject poverty ; circumstances which, to a mind so prejudiced, were strong on the side of her suspicions.

" But how shall we find him out, if we never

see him, dear?" said Nelly, to her mistress; "and doesn't he keep out of our way? If he warn't afraid to see us, wouldn't he have come here to call upon your ladyship? Not he, the villain! He dursn't shew his face, where the villany's writ!"

"I mean to go there and see him, Nelly; I'm resolved on it, cost me what it may, as soon as I have strength."

"And when'll that be, dear, and you wasting away with the sorrow?"

"But if I let you go to him, Nelly, you'll put him on his guard. You'll have no command over yourself."

"Wont I? Oh, but I will though! I'll come round about him, so that he shall never guess what I'm after."

"Besides, he'll never tell you what I want to find out—where he was, or where he pretends to have been, at that time."

"Maybe he mayn't tell me, but I may find out myself."

"If we only knew that, it might furnish a clue to track him by. Oh, Nelly! if I could but live to see him on the scaffold, I could die happy!"

Nelly's impatience, however, could not abide

longer delay; and one morning, when her mistress was too ill to leave her bed, she put on her bonnet and shawl, and set off on a visit to the Castle; where she begged one of the servants to inform Mr. Rivers, that Nelly, that was nurse at the Castle when he lived there, had come to see him.

Mr. Rivers's recollections of Nelly were not very agreeable; she had been too fond of taunting him with his dependence, and of contrasting his prospects with those of the infant heir, not to provoke a great deal of resentment at the time; but the man did not feel disposed to resent the injuries of the boy, especially towards one whom he supposed had come with a view of asking his assistance, or profiting by his generosity; so he immediately desired she should be admitted.

He was sitting in his arm-chair in the library, with a book in his hand, when she entered the room, just where her darling foster-child used to sit; and as there was a strong family likeness betwixt the cousins, "her very heart," to use her own expression, "seemed to turn round inside of her, at the sight of him;" but she forced a smile to her features as she said, "Ah, then! you've got it at last, Master Mar-

maduke, honey! There you are; just where you always wanted to be. Didn't I always tell you it 'ud come to you some day or other?"

"I can't say I recollect that circumstance," said Mr. Rivers, who, though little pleased with the style of the address, did not think it worth while to remark on it; "but I am glad to see you looking so well, Nelly. Can I do anything to serve you?"

"That you could, your honour, if you'd take me to wait upon the young Misses. I'm getting old now, it's true for you, but I can stump about; and as for the brogue, I've been so long out o' the country, it's left me entirely."

"I can't do that, Nelly, as my establishment is filled up, and there's no chance of a vacancy, at present; but if I can serve you in any other way, I shall be happy to do so. Where do you live? Are you in service?"

"I live with her ladyship, sure, at Little Otterley; and 'twas she sent me here to inquire after your honour, and the mistress, and the young misses."

"Oh, you come from Lady Eastlake! Indeed! And you are living with her, are you?"

"To be sure I am; where else should I live? and 'twas she sent me, I tell you."

"Oh! sit down, Nelly; you have had a long walk. And how is Lady Eastlake?"

"Well, she's as well as can be expected, maybe; but there's a thing that's upon her mind, sadly."

"What's that?"

"That we can't lay hold on the man that did it—nor upon him that, maybe, didn't *do* it, but planned it should be done. It's then she'll be better, when she sees him upon the scaffold;" and as she spoke her eyes glared with malignancy on the object of her hatred and suspicion.

It was impossible not to understand the insinuation, and the excessive agitation and distress painted on the countenance of Mr. Rivers, evinced that he did so: his very lips turned white, and although they moved, as if he were going to speak, no sound proceeded from them. There was evidently a great internal struggle, and he seemed at a loss whether to answer her words, or to evade them;—he seemed to decide that it was less derogatory to himself to do the latter.

"He will be taken, no doubt," said he:

"That will he!" replied she; "for there's them that 'ud find him if he hid himself under the earth, or piled the blessed mountains of Connamara on the top of him."

"I didn't think of it before," said Mr. Rivers, "though I ought to have done it; but I will offer a reward of a thousand pounds for the discovery of the assassin. I'll have the advertisements printed and published without delay."

"That's like a darling as you are, and always was," said Nelly; "and there's no need to turn so white about it, for them that's innocent hasn't no cause for fear."

"I shall do it immediately, Nelly," replied Mr. Rivers, looking firmly and unshrinkingly at her. "And as Lady Eastlake has sent you to inquire for me, perhaps she'll allow me to pay her a visit."

"That will she, and welcome," answered Nelly, the least in the world taken aback by this proposal.

"Then I'll wait upon her this afternoon," he said, moving towards the door. "So, good morning to you."

Nelly took great credit to herself for the diplomatic expertness with which she had

conducted herself in this interview, and assumed all the merit of having brought about the proposition of a visit, in which "her ladyship would be able to sound the depths of him herself," whilst Lady Eastlake prepared herself to receive it, with a mixed feeling of hatred, horror, and triumph.

It was about four o'clock that the click of the swing gate warned her of her visiter's approach, and looking up, she perceived him slowly walking round the small sweep in front of the house, and presently afterwards he entered the room. Lady Eastlake did not rise to receive her visiter ; had she been so inclined, she could not have done it ; her limbs would not have supported her ; her whole frame shook ; her bloodless face, pale before, grew still more pale, and that of Mr. Rivers vied with it, in its ghastly hue. She fixed her eye on him as he entered the room, with an expression that seemed to say, "*I know you, though the world does not,—me you cannot deceive, though you may others.*" "Sit down, Marmaduke Rivers," she said. "It's long since you sat under roof of mine."

"There has been a feud of many years betwixt us, Lady Eastlake," replied the visiter,

for which, perhaps, I am to blame. For any annoyance I caused you, I beg your pardon."

"I was beyond your annoyance then," she answered. "I was only vulnerable in one direction—there I am hit at last."

"I am sorry, sincerely sorry, I assure you, for your sufferings."

"No; I cannot expect your sympathy. My great loss is your great gain. You were in poverty—abject poverty, I hear; had been even imprisoned for debt; and now, by the drawing of a trigger, you are the master of Eastlake and thirty thousand a-year. That shot was well aimed for you."

"Doubtless, I am a great gainer by your misfortunes, Lady Eastlake; but do me the justice to believe, that I sincerely lament the catastrophe which has procured me these advantages; and if I can do anything to aid in the apprehension of the assassin, I shall be most willing to go hand in hand with you. I propose, in the first place, to offer a thousand pounds for his apprehension."

"Do!" said Lady Eastlake.

"The person suspected, I hear, is a deserter, who has been traced some distance on the London road, and since lost sight of."

"The public have fixed their suspicions on him," said Lady Eastlake; "but, from various circumstances, I am satisfied he is not the man."

Mr. Rivers wished to say, "Who, then, do you suspect?" but, for some reason or other, he could not utter the words; and his eye quailed before that of Lady Eastlake.

"You were not with your family when my son was murdered," she said; "where were you?"

"I was out of town. I had gone down to Scotland to see General Elwes, in the hope of inducing him to do something to assist my family."

"Then you were at Ford when my son was shot?"

"Not exactly. I had left it."

"Then you were on the road. Where did the intelligence reach you?"

"I think it was near London," replied Mr. Rivers; but the hesitation and confusion with which he spoke might have awakened a suspicion that he was not speaking quite candidly, in a less prejudiced mind than the one that was sitting in judgment on his words and demeanour. So thoroughly convinced was Lady

Eastlake of his guilt, that her first impulse was to say, "Marmaduke Rivers, thou art the man!" but a moment's consideration restrained her. "If I do that, he'll escape me; he'll be out of the country before I can find the means of convicting him; which, now that she had some clue whereby to track his steps, she did not doubt she should effect. So she changed her tactics, seeking to allay the alarm she saw she had awakened; and constrained herself so far as to conclude the interview with much more graciousness and civility than it had commenced.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Il y a deux rôles dans l'amour : celui de devouement et de l'abnégation est toujours celui des grandes âmes."

BALZAC.

"Was man nicht begreift das findet man leicht toll."

BETTINE BRENTANO AN GOETHE.

WHEN William Bell opened his eyes, on recovering from the swoon into which he had fallen from the pain of his wound, he perceived by the light of a tallow candle, which stood on a chair beside the bed, that he was in a small, low room, with a sloping roof, and a little latticed window, one half of which was open ; and it was the cold air, blowing on his head, that seemed to have revived him. On the floor, be-

side the bed, knelt a female figure, whose lips were closely pressed to his hand, which she held clasped in hers. She did not raise her head, for she was not aware that his senses were restored; and, puzzled and confused by his imperfect recollections, and the strange place wherein he found himself, he remained silent, trying to recal his memory, and discover where he was, and who this tender and loving nurse might be. Her head was bent down, and her back was to the light, so that he could not see her features; all he saw was the dark silken hair, braided across a high white forehead; and feeling, partly physically and partly morally, disinclined to move or speak, this mutual immobility continued, till the sound of footsteps on the stairs caused the girl to raise her head, and look towards the door. Then William saw that it was Peggy, and the idea of his regiment being closely connected in his mind with the soldier's daughter, he immediately concluded that he had been apprehended and was a prisoner; and the consequence of this misconception was, that her appearance, which would otherwise have occasioned him the greatest surprise, caused him none at all.

"Peggy," he said, in a low voice, "so they've brought me back to you. I don't recollect how it happened. Who was it stabbed me?"

"I don't know, dear," she said; "all I thought of was getting you away out of the crowd, for fear anybody 'd know you; so we put you in a coach, and brought you home, without stopping to look after the man."

This speech did not much enlighten William; but before he could ask for further explanation, the door of the room opened, and a little old man entered with a tripping step, holding a gallipot and some other articles in his hand. His person was very small; his hair, which was long, and hung about his shoulders, was of a silver grey; his face was pale, rather long and thin, and somewhat wrinkled, but full of expression and vivacity; and he wore a shabby suit of brown clothes, which hung loosely about him, as if they had been made for somebody else.

"Ah, father!" said Peggy, "I'm glad you're come. Have you got the things?"

"Oui, mon enfant—that mean, yes, my chile."

"I know that, father. Never mind what anything means now; but come and dress his wound."

"Has the blood stop running?"

"Yes; it hasn't bled since you bandaged it."

"Bon!—that mean good. Did I not tell you I was chirurgien? Ah! he is to himself again! How you feel, sare?"

"Thank you, sir," replied William, "I have a good deal of pain in my side. I feel something pressing very tight about me."

"Ah! that is the bandage I put. I 'fraid if you come to yourself, while I am gone to the apothecaire, you bleed too much. Now, sir, you give me leave, I panser, that is, dress your wound, and make him well soon."

"Is this gentleman the surgeon of the regiment?" inquired William of Peggy, altogether bewildered.

"No, dear," said Peggy, half laughing; "how can you think so? This is Mr. Mirli-flor. You don't suppose you're with the regiment, do you?"

"Where am I, then?" said William. "I thought I was in London."

“So you are,” replied Peggy. “This is our lodging, where Mr. Mirliflor and I live.”

“You please lie on you other side, sare; comme ça, bon.”

“But, Peggy, I don’t understand you. If I am in London, how came you here?”

“You please hold in you breath, sare, and not speak, while I dress you wound.”

“Hush, dear, you mustn’t ask questions. I’ll tell you everything without. Mr. Mirliflor and I were in Oxford Street ; I was singing, and he was playing the fiddle——”

“Le violon,” said Mr. Mirliflor.

“Well, it’s the same thing, father.”

“Non, non,” said the old man.

“Well, veolone, or whatever he likes to call it; and there was a crowd standing round, listening to us; and, all at once, there was a great hubbub, and the people said a man was stabbed; so Mr. Mirliflor said he was a surgeon, and the people made room for us to get near, that he might look at him, and then I saw it was you.”

“But, Peggy——”

“You no speak, sare, if you please.”

“Hush, dear! So the people wanted to carry you to the hospital, but I said you was

my brother; and so they got a coach, and helped us to put you in."

"Well, but, Peggy," began William again; for his surprise and curiosity were so great as quite to supersede the pain of his wound; and, so far from enlightening him by what she said, the more he heard, the less he understood. Who Mr. Mirliflor could be, and how she came to be with him, singing in the streets of London, appeared altogether inexplicable. But the Frenchman again desired him not to speak; and Peggy, feeling a little awkward and shy at the thoughts of avowing that she was travelling about the world in search of him, said she would tell him the rest another time.

"Now, sare, you do ver well. Here is a leetal ting for you to take which do you good, and then you go sleep." And Peggy, having arranged everything about William as comfortably as she could, she and the old man retired into an adjoining room, leaving the door of communication open, that they might not be out of hearing of the invalid.

"Il n'est pas ton frère! He is not your brother!" exclaimed Monsieur Mirliflor, with some surprise. "C'est ton prétendu, alors?"

"What?" said Peggy.

"You marry him!"

"No," answered Peggy, shaking her head.

"You no marry him?" exclaimed Monsieur Mirliflor. "What for you no marry him?"

"He's not fond of me; he's fond of another girl," replied Peggy.

"Sacre!" exclaimed Mr. Mirliflor; "il aime une autre! Et toi?"

"What?" said Peggy, again.

"What you bring him here? C'est ton cousin, peut-être?"

"Cousin? no!" replied Peggy, "he's no relation."

"Il n'est pas de tes parents! You love him?"

"Yes, dearly," answered Peggy.

"Ah, ça!" said the old man, "et il ne t'aime pas? He no love you?"

"No," replied Peggy.

"Mais!" said the old man, in a tone of expostulation.

"What?" inquired Peggy.

"Ce n'est pas sage, mon enfant; you not wise."

"Wise! Oh, no!" said Peggy, shaking her head, "I know that, but I can't help it."

"You can't help to love him?"

"No," said Peggy, shaking her head again.

"You try?"

"*He* tried to make me not love him," said Peggy; "but it didn't make any difference."

"Comment? et tu l'aimes toujours, de même? You love him always?"

"Always" said Peggy, "dearly," laying her hand on her bosom.

"A—h!" said the old man, with a very long expiration, "pauvre enfant! And it was to find him you go about sing with me?"

"Yes, that was why I did it."

"A—h!" said Monsieur Mirliflor again! "and now you find him, what you do with him?"

"Nurse him, and take care of him till he's well."

"Ah! c'est bon; mais après? After he well, he no stay here with you."

"No," replied Peggy, with a sigh, and another shake of the head.

Monsieur Mirliflor could only fix his eyes on Peggy with a mixture of wonder and compassion. Her motives he could not comprehend, nor did he know how to direct his questions so as to discover them, and as she did not think it right to enter further into William's affairs, her conduct certainly seemed sufficiently

inexplicable, since the only motive she could assign even to herself for following him was, the hope of inducing him to return to the regiment; and as all prospect of his doing that time enough to be of any avail was over long ago, she was not without considerable perplexity as to how she should answer the interrogatories he would himself inevitably put to her, as soon as he was sufficiently recovered to talk.

In the meanwhile, he was nursed with the most assiduous attention; and the old man, who was out great part of the day, playing his instrument about the streets, lay on the floor by his bed at night. As a good deal of fever ensued, he was for some days very ill, and the old Frenchman wanted to call in further advice; but to this both Peggy and William strenuously objected, and he finally succeeded in bringing the case to a favourable issue without it.

"But now, Peggy," said William, one day when they were alone, "you must satisfy my curiosity, and tell me what is the occasion of my finding you in this strange situation?"

"What signifies?" said Peggy, who stood a good deal in awe of William, and dreaded the explanation. "Wasn't it better for you I was

there, ready to pick you up, and bring you home here, when you was wounded?"

"I'm very much obliged to you, I assure you, Peggy; you've done me a great service; but that doesn't tell me what brought you here. Have you had any quarrel with your father and mother?"

"No," replied Peggy.

"Well, what then?"

"If I tell you, will you promise not to be angry?"

"Certainly."

"Well then, Lawson and the others said, when you went away, that, as you'd such a good character in the regiment, and was such a favourite with the officers, if you came back of yourself, without being taken, perhaps you might get off easy; and so——

"Well?"

"I thought if I could find you, I might persuade you to come back," said Peggy, blushing up to the eyes, and her heart palpitating with fear.

"Do you mean to say, Peggy, you came away from your father and mother in pursuit of me?"

"Yes, I did," said Peggy; "that I might try and persuade you to go back."

"But that was very wrong, Peggy; besides, how could you hope to find me?"

"But I did find you," said Peggy.

"By a very strange chance; but you didn't even know which way I was gone."

"Yes, I did; I guessed you'd go to Eastlake, because somebody lives there."

"Did you go to Eastlake, then?" said William, looking displeased and alarmed.

"You needn't look angry, William; I wouldn't have said anything to Lucy Graham if I had gone there; but I didn't—for before I got there, I heard you were gone to London."

"How could you possibly hear that?" inquired William.

"I heard more than that," said Peggy, looking at him earnestly.

"Tell me all you heard, Peggy."

Peggy knelt down by his side, and taking hold of his hand, she leant her forehead upon it, whilst she said, "I heard you had shot a gentleman, out of jealousy about Lucy Graham."

"And do you believe it, Peggy?"

"I don't know," she said.

"You don't know!" he said, looking displeased.

"How can I, William? You might have done it in a passion."

"But I didn't do it at all, Peggy."

"Thank God!" said Peggy, "that's one danger out of the way."

"I'm afraid not," said William; "for though I didn't do it, I'm not sure that I could clear myself of it; at least, not without doing what I should be very sorry to do. But who is this Mr. Mirliflor, Peggy, and how did you become acquainted with him?"

"Why, when I came away from the regiment, I had a little money, but it went so fast that I was afraid it would be all gone before I found you; so I thought people might give me something if I sang when I got to the farm-houses; and so they did. I stood out in the middle of the road and sang, and then they used to come out and look at me, and often they gave me money; and one day when I was singing in a town, Mr. Mirliflor heard me, and came and spoke to me; and so we got acquainted; and he said he was going on towards London; and just then it was, I read in a newspaper about the gentleman being shot, and that you were suspected of doing it, and that you were gone towards London, too; and

that you had robbed a wagoner of his clothes ; and that you had robbed some people at an inn, where you stopped all night."

"Good God!" cried William, "what will they say next?"

"But I didn't believe a word of all that," continued Peggy; "but all the people that were talking about it said you'd be sure to make for London, so I thought the best chance of finding you was to go to London, too."

"But how could you expect to find me in such a place as this, Peggy?"

"But, you know, I didn't know what sort of place it was. I didn't know it was such a big place; and when I got here and saw it, I hadn't any hopes at all; and I was thinking of going back to the regiment, for fear you should be found, and taken there, while I was away."

"And this Mr. Mirliflor, who is he?"

"Well, he says he was once a doctor in his own country; but when there were great troubles there, and they cut off the king's head, they were going to cut off his, too; and he escaped out of prison, and came over here. So he goes about playing the fiddle—the veolone, he calls it—for he lost all his money; and we agreed to travel to London together,

and he's just as good as a father to me ; and he wants me to stay with him always."

"But that will never do to go singing about the streets, Peggy ; it's not respectable. Indeed, it was very wrong of you to leave your parents."

"I couldn't help it," said Peggy, beginning to cry ; "I was so unhappy."

"But you know, Peggy, what I've always told you ; I cannot——"

"Oh, hush ! hush !" cried Peggy, clapping her hands upon her ears, "where's the need to tell me so any more ? Haven't you told me so a hundred times, and don't I know it very well. I don't ask you to love me, do I ? I only ask you to let me love you, and not to be unkind to me."

But as men have no conception of so unselfish and disinterested a love as Peggy's, and are unable to comprehend on how little kindness, and forbearance, and gentleness, such an affection could exist ; because they cannot give all, they give nothing ; they starve it, to kill it ; and inflict unutterable anguish on the loving heart, that it would cost them but a word and a smile to soothe and to cheer.

CHAPTER XXX.

Aspatia. This should be Theseus—h'as a cousening face—
You meant him for a man?

Ant. He was so, madam.

Asp. Why, then, tis well enough."

MAID'S TRAGEDY.

"MY stars, Jessie Matthieson! is that you?" exclaimed Mrs. Lines, the wife of a small haberdasher, in Cheapside, and sister to Jessie's mother, as that fair damsel one day stept out of a hackney-coach, and tript into the shop; "why, who'd have thought of seeing of you?"

"I thought you'd be surprised," replied Jessie. "You never expected to see me in London, did you?"

"Expect! no, to be sure!" replied Mrs.

Lines. "Why what has brought you all this way? Is my sister with you?"

"No," answered Jessie, "mother's at East-lake, I suppose; don't you never hear from her?"

"The last letter I had was to ask if we'd seen anything of you; but that's a long while ago. Sure, you've not been away ever since that."

"Yes, I have!" answered Jessie; "I'm in service now; and like it much better than living at home."

"In service!" cried Mrs. Lines; "and who do you live with?"

"With Lord Belton; and now the family's come up to London, I'm come with them. I'm housemaid there."

"Well, to be sure! Who'd have thought it? Well, you must come in and take a bit of something. Mr. Lines is out; but here's Jacob, that's a sort of cousin of yours; that is, he's Mr. Line's nephew." Jacob, a smart-looking young man, in a blue coat and grey trowsers, was busy at a desk, casting accounts; but he rose and paid his respects to Jessie; after which, he resumed his occupation.

"Well now, Jessie," said Mrs. Lines, "you

must tell me all about the Eastlake folks; for I ha'n't heard a word of what's going on there, since I was down this time four years."

"What," said Jessie, "didn't your hear of the squire's being shot?"

"Oh, to be sure; all the world heard that; but we never heard no particulars, besides what was in the newspapers; your mother never wrote us a line. Was it really all along o' Lucy Graham? Why, I thought she was as steady as old Time."

"May be she is, and may be she an't," replied Jessie; "but people will be jealous, you know, whether they've occasion or no."

"But did she let him keep company with her?" inquired Mrs. Lines.

"Oh, he used to go on with her, just as he did with other people."

"Yes, poor gentleman, he's gone now, but he was a shocking bad man after the girls, to be sure! You know, Jessie, when you came away from Eastlake, they said you was gone off with him."

"What signifies what people says? They will talk, you know."

"That they will, sure enough; but I want to know all about that business of the squire

and Lucy Graham. She went to meet him at the Four Stones, didn't she? and William Bell came upon them and shot him?"

"I never could make out clear whether she went there to meet him or not," replied Jessie. "You know it all happened after I came away; but Joe, one of our grooms that went with his lordship to Eastlake, was there at the time; and he says that she declared she didn't, but that she went there to meet William Bell; but if William knew she'd come to meet him, and not the squire, what did he shoot him for? That's what I say."

"Very true; there don't seem no sense in it. But is it certain it was William Bell that did it?"

"Who else could?" answered Jessie. "They suspected Leonard at first, but he came back; and cleared himself. Leonard was jealous enough, to be sure, when the squire took notice of me; but I'd have been sorry he'd done such a thing as that."

"I shouldn't have thought William would have done it, either; but William was always hasty. I wonder how Lucy Graham takes it."

"She was very down about it at first, Joe said; but I haven't heard since."

"I should like uncommon to know what's come of William!" said Mrs. Lines. "Some say he's hid in London, and some say he's got off to America."

"He'd an uncommon narrow escape," said Jessie, nodding her head, significantly, "while he was travelling along the road."

"Had he?" said Mrs. Lines; "we saw something about it in the newspapers, at the time; but I forget what it was."

"But this that I mean wasn't in the papers. Nobody knew it but me, for I never told nobody."

"What! you didn't see him, did you?"

"I did," said Jessie.

"You did! My stars, Jessie!—why there's a thousand pounds offered for him."

"Is there?" said Jessie. "Well, I don't know where he is now; and if I did, I shouldn't tell, may be. When I saw him it was only two or three days after the squire was shot. What should he do but come to Belton, and there I saw him on a Sunday, at church. I couldn't take my eyes off him all the service time if it was ever so, for I was sure it was a face I had seen before, but I couldn't think who it was."

"What! not know William Bell, when you saw him face to face?"

"Oh, but if you'd seen how he was dressed!"

"Why, what had he on?"

"He'd got on a blue wagoner's frock and a fur cap, just the same as the carters and the ploughmen wear on working-days. If it hadn't been for his odd dress, I don't know that I should have seen him at all; but it caught my eye so, more particular as he was sitting in the pew with Mr. Groves, that keeps the inn; but everybody that looked at him might see with half an eye that he wasn't what he pretended to be; he was so upright, and held his head up so, and had such a look with him."

At this crisis of the discourse, Jessie happening to raise her eyes, she perceived another pair as bright as her own intently fixed upon her face. They belonged to Mr. Jacob Lines, the young man in the blue coat and grey trowsers; and as Jessie's vanity was full-blown again, in spite of the blight it had met with the preceding year, she immediately concluded that the owner of them was transfixed by the power of her charms; and began accordingly to play off certain little *minauderies* that she thought likely to enhance her attractions. Mr. Jacob

Lines did not at first appear conscious of the darts that were aimed at him. He seemed, on the contrary, wholly absorbed in listening to the conversation; but a pause ensuing, owing to Jessie's attention being withdrawn from the subject under discussion, by the glare of his eyes, he had time to perceive and interpret her blushes and small airs; whereupon, he lost no time in acting up to the occasion, converting his stare of excited curiosity into one of open admiration.

"And did he see you?" inquired Mrs. Lines.

"Eh?" said Jessie.

"Did he see you, I say? Did you speak to him?"

"Oh, no;—yes, I mean; I spoke to him."

"Well, and what did he say?"

"Why, when service was over," continued Jessie, making an effort to collect herself, "I went up to the pew door and looked at him, so;" and here she made the very most of her own black eyes for the benefit of Mr. Lines; "and though I don't think he wanted to speak to me, he couldn't help it, you know, when he saw I knew him."

"Well, and did he own to you that he'd shot the squire."

"Bless you, ne; to be sure not. I didn't know nothing about it myself till after he was gone; for this, that I'm telling you, about his coming to Belton, was only two or three days after it had happened; but, on that very day, when I went down to the servants' hall to dinner, who should I see but Joe, the groom, that had gone with his lordship! And there they were all standing round him, listening to what he was a telling. His lordship had sent him back with the hunters."

"And did he say it was William Bell that had done it?"

"He said it was him and Leonard Graham between them that had done it, and that there was a great deal of money offered for taking them."

"And what did you say? Did you tell about William being there?"

"Not I; I never let on a word, though they'd all seen me talking to him; but little they guessed who it was. But I pretended I wasn't very well, and that I didn't want any dinner; and off I set, as hard as I could go, back to the Belton Arms, for it's just close to the park gate, thinking to find him there; but he was gone."

"What a pity!" said Mrs. Lines; "and have you never heard anything of him since?"

"Nothing but what Mr. Cave, his lordship's valet, told us when he came back. He told us about Leonard Graham's being cleared; and he said that William had been traced nearly up to London, and then they'd lost sight of him. And there was a great many stories—some of 'em I don't believe. They said, he'd got into a wagon, and stole the driver's frock; and then others said, that he'd got a farmer's boy to change clothes with him; and then they said, that he'd got up in the middle of the night, at an inn, where he was stopping, and robbed the house. But, lor! I don't believe that; do you?"

"There's no telling," said Mrs. Lines. "Some folks when they goes wrong, don't know where to stop."

"Ah, I don't think William Bell would do such a thing as that, though!"

"Well, I don't know that he would, to be sure. And where do you think he is, now?"

"Gracious knows! Mr. Cave says that he's certain he's hid somewhere in London; and that his lordship says he's certain of it, too."

"Oh, and I forgot, there was another story! They said he'd gone to a shop in some town, and bought himself a suit of clothes; a handsome black coat, and a pair of grey trowsers, and a hat; and, somehow, that was the way they missed him; for they didn't hear of that till it was too late, and he must have got on to London."

"My stars! Who'd have thought of such queer things happening to William Bell, that was so steady! Sure enough, nobody knows what's to happen to them before they die."

"If he's taken, they say he'll be shot for deserting—let alone the murder; so he hasn't much chance, poor fellow!"

"No; Mr. Lines says they'd only transport him for deserting; but that's bad enough, for one like him. However, it'll be a pretty penny in the pocket of them that's to find him."

"Well, I must be going," said Jessie, rising.

"Don't go yet. Can't you wait and see Mr. Lines?"

"No, I must go now; but I'll come and see you again, the first day I can get out," said Peggy. "By the bye, which way am I to turn when I get to the end of the street?"

“ You must go to the right, and then take the first turning to the left; and then you go straight on, till you get to a church—and then——”

“ Oh, my goodness! I never shall remember it; I believe I'd better have a coach. That's why I took a coach here, because I couldn't find my way.”

“ Hadn't I better go a little way with Miss Jessie?” said Jacob. “ It's not easy for a stranger to find the road.”

This offer being accepted, the two young people started together, arm in arm, and a very agreeable walk Jessie found it. Mr. Jacob Lines was a good-looking young man, with a certain air of a London swell about him, that was exceedingly dazzling to Jessie. It is true, a physiognomist might not have altogether liked his countenance; but Jessie was not a physiognomist; she thought his fierce grey eyes very handsome, and the quantity of black hair about his face extremely stylish; and she looked upon him, with the exception of the baronet, as decidedly the most distinguished conquest she had ever made. That it *was* a conquest she could not doubt; his *empressement* and attention left no question

on that head; and her graces and affectations were equally indicative of the gratification his admiration afforded her. He conducted her as far as the area-gate of Lord Belton's house; and then, having obtained permission to call on the following Sunday, with great deference took his leave, whilst Jessie went in, full plumed with vanity, to look in the glass, and admire her own clear dark skin, flushed with pleasure; and her bright eyes, sparkling with delight; and to assure Margaret, the laundry-maid, that Mr. Jacob Lines was quite a tip-top sort of young man; and that it made her laugh to think of the difference betwixt him and Leonard Graham, even when Leonard had his best clothes on.

On the following Sunday, Mr. Jacob, who did not intend to lose the ground he had got, called early enough to conduct Jessie to church—the mart of a maid-servant's vanity; after which, he accompanied her to dine at her aunt's, and in the evening saw her home; and it was not long ere, by unremitted attention, together with the powerful assistance of the recommendations we have above enumerated, he found himself in full possession of the influence over Jessie's mind that he desired.

She was as much in love with him as so vain a person could be; that is to say, she was over head and ears in love with his attentions, and his flatteries; and with the envied distinction that the devotions of so modish a person conferred upon her.

When he was satisfied that his empire was confirmed, however, he somewhat changed his tactics. He began to sigh and look melancholy; to fall into fits of abstraction, and stare violently at the coals or the tea-pot, or even the dust-pan or the mop: the object was immaterial, since it was evidently to be understood, that what he looked at he did not see. This was a style that Jessie thought became his black whiskers exceedingly; but when he carried the mood a stage further, and began to absent himself and relax in his attentions, she did not admire it so much. Presently, it made her very uneasy, restless, and fretful; and, by and by, she found that it was altogether insupportable, and that she could not bear it at all. When things had arrived at this pass, she wrote him a letter, wherein she verbally betrayed to him, what he very well knew before—namely, the extent of his power over her, and besought him for an explanation

of his altered manner. This effusion brought her an answer, commencing with "Adored Jessie!" and concluding with "eternal, unalterable, and hopeless love;" the intermediate space being filled up, with sundry mysterious insinuations, about painful situations, distressing circumstances, agonizing feelings, &c. &c., which left Jessie no more satisfied than she was before. So she wrote again, giving him to understand that her agonies were no whit behind his own, and entreating him to come and see her, which he obligingly did.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"More craft was in a button'd cap,
And in an old wife's rail,
Than in my life it was my hap
To see on down or dale."

THE WOODMAN'S WALK.

"Si la vanité ne renverse pas entièrement les vertus, du moins elle les ébranle toutes."—ROCHEFOUCAULD.

LUCY GRAHAM had a suitor called Farmer Grange—he was a few years older than herself; a man of good character and well to do in the world, and he was the husband Hannah Graham had long fixed upon for her daughter. Certainly, no one could deny that he would be a much better match for her than William, in every respect but one; and that one, Lucy's inclination, Mrs. Graham had never been dis-

posed to consult. This want of consideration for her daughter's feelings proceeded from more sources than one. Leonard had been a delicate, shy, retiring, dependent boy—dependent on his mother; clinging to her side, hanging upon her gown, “tied to her apron-string,” as the phrase is; whilst Lucy had been a healthy, firm, self-relying child. Leonard had twined himself about her heart by the need he had of her; and as he grew up, his habits of reliance continued, and he had made her the depository of his love for Jessie, with all its pains and its penalties; whilst Lucy, not being invited by equal tenderness and sympathy, had never been led to the same degree of confidence. There was more intimacy between her and her father, and she was decidedly the old man's favourite; and as Hannah was by no means a faultless daughter of Eve, this circumstance was not without its influence. In the next place, it was her desire, that the farm and what little they had to leave, should descend, undiminished, to Leonard. Leonard was not fit to struggle with the hardships of the world, and it was not too much for him; but if Lucy did not marry a man that could support her, this arrangement could not take

place; it would not have been fair, and Georgie would not have consented to it. Thus, the idea of Lucy's marrying William had been hateful to her ever since it appeared clear that his father had died a beggar; and to prevent a match she so much disliked, she had not scrupled to intercept their letters, and to do many other things that she should not; and as we very commonly grow to dislike people that we have treated with injustice, the more ungenerously she had behaved to William, the more she disliked him, and the more her heart was hardened towards her daughter. It is true, she persuaded herself it was all for Lucy's good that she was acting; and so it was, in a worldly point of view; but as Lucy's love for William, which had budded in their childhood, to bloom in their maturer years, was not to be overcome, she, of course, could see no good unconnected with him; and she had therefore remained unmoved by her mother's opposition, and uninfluenced by her schemes. But the circumstances of the last few months had given Hannah a great advantage, and had reduced the affairs of the young couple to a very hopeless condition. Lucy continued firm in her belief that William was

innocent of the murder, but she stood nearly alone in her conviction; even her father's faith was shaken, for since Leonard's justification, no shadow of suspicion seemed to fall upon anybody else; and except by Lady Eastlake and Nelly, the deserter was universally held to be the criminal. But even supposing he were not, he was still a lost man; and if he ever appeared again, it would be either to mount the scaffold or suffer the sentence of a court-martial. He was, therefore, as far as Lucy was concerned, virtually dead; whilst, on the other hand, here was Farmer Grange ready and eager to marry her—Farmer Grange, with a comfortable house over his head, plenty of good stacks in his yard, horses in his stable, cows in his meadow, and money in the bank; and Farmer Grange asked no portion—Lucy's merits were quite enough for him; her beauty and virtue were all he sought. Even Geordie could not but admit that he thought this too good an offer to be rejected, especially considering that his own circumstances were none of the best, and that all idea of a union with William must be laid aside.

But Lucy could not make up her mind to abandon her first love. If he were a deserter,

the only crime she admitted him guilty of, it was for her sake, and through her mother's unjust suppression of their correspondence that he had been driven to desert; sacrificing the rewards of a virtuous life, and the advantages he had earned by his good conduct,—blighting his future prospects, endangering his life, and, finally, by an unhappy combination of circumstances, subjecting himself to the dreadful suspicion of being a murderer. It seemed too cruel to crown all these misfortunes by the bitter pang of hearing that she for whom he had immolated himself, careless of his sufferings and forgetful of their long plighted faith, had cast him from her heart, and flung herself into the arms of another. Lucy felt she could not do it, and so she told her parents, and Farmer Grange too, who, not thinking it right to persecute her himself, or cause her to be persecuted by others, had the generosity to forego his suit, and, as he said, “plague her no more”—a proceeding for which she was sincerely grateful, but which her father regretted, and which rendered her mother furious, and ten times more hostile to William than she had been before; for if Lucy continued in this mind, there

was every probability that Farmer Grange would soon fling away the willow, and look about for another wife. Indeed, there seemed now but one road through which the darling object of Hannah's hopes was likely to be attained, and that was the apprehension of William. If that fortunate event should occur before Farmer Grange had transferred his affections elsewhere, the obnoxious lover would assuredly be put out of the way by one contingency or the other, and then Lucy, after a reasonable interval of mourning, might probably be induced to yield to her own advantage and the wishes of her parents.

Such was the position of Lucy's affairs, when, one day, to the surprise of everybody, Jessie Matthieson arrived at Eastlake. She came, she said, to see her mother and her friends, for a little while; after which she should return to London, where she had a very good situation. She seemed extremely flighty, and was very gaily dressed, inspiring Geordie with strange suspicions, and the young damsels of the village with an infinite deal of envy. With respect to her sudden and mysterious disappearance, she was by no means communicative. She said she had very good

reasons for what she had done, and had never had cause to repent it, and they might all see that her scheme had turned out very well; but when she was accused of having been living at Hillside with the baronet, she stoutly denied the imputation, and positively affirmed that she had never been at Hillside in her life. One of her first visits was to Farmer Graham's, where her appearance caused a very considerable sensation, reawakening all poor Leonard's hopes and fears, agitating Lucy, by her account of her interview with William, at Belton, arousing Geordie's apprehensions that she would set his son "daft again," and Hannah's suspicions that she was the bearer of some communication from the deserter to her daughter.

"Not I," said Jessie; "I don't know where he is; I wish I did. Don't you think Lucy knows anything about him?"

"Not a word," said Mrs. Graham; "that I'm certain of."

"She might have a letter, and never tell nothing about it," said Jessie.

"She's never had one," replied Hannah; "she couldn't have a letter without my knowing it."

"Would Mrs. Dunn tell you?"

"Yes, she would," answered Hannah, with a significant nod. "But what do *you* want to know where he is for, Jessie?"

"I should like to know," said Jessie.

"Well, but what for? You wouldn't tell, would you?"

"Oh, no!" answered Jessie; "of course not."

"There's a thousand pounds promised by the new squire here to anybody that'll find him."

"That's a deal of money, isn't it?" said Jessie.

"It is," said Mrs. Graham. "It 'ud make a body comfortable for life."

"*Somebody* 'll get it, of course," said Jessie; "for everybody says he's sure to be taken, sooner or later, unless he's gone over sea to America."

"I don't think he's done that," said Hannah.

"Do *you* think he's in London?" inquired Jessie.

"Yes, I do," replied Hannah.

"What makes you think so?"

"I have my reasons," answered Hannah.

"No," said Jessie; "you don't know anything, do you?"

"What if I did?" said Hannah. "*I* couldn't do anything in it, you know."

"No, of course not," said Jessie, artfully; "it would never do for you, and he engaged to marry Lucy; he's just like your own son, as one may say."

"He shall never be son of mine, if I can help it!" said Hannah, bitterly.

"Lucy 'll never marry nobody else, that you may depend," said Jessie.

"If he'd only got his deserts, she would, and glad too," said Hannah.

"Ah, if anybody knew where he was!" said Jessie, again.

Here there was a pause; Jessie saw that Mrs. Graham knew something that she was half inclined to tell, and Mrs. Graham saw that Jessie's object was to discover her secret, but the question was—what use did she mean to make of it, and was she to be trusted. She was uncertain as to her motives, and doubted her discretion, and Jessie perceived very clearly the obstacle that lay in her way.

"Suppose," said Hannah, "you were to light on him some day, what should you do?"

"Well, what if I was to tell, and get all the money?" said Jessie, between jest and earnest.

"Your telling would be very different to my telling," said Hannah. "I couldn't tell, for Lucy's sake; besides, Geordie 'ud never forgive me—he'd call it the price of blood! Oh, no, it 'ud never do for me to have anything to do with it; but if he's sure to be taken, as everybody says he is, one 'ud rather somebody one knew had the money than a stranger."

"What a fortune it would be!" said Jessie. "What would Leonard say!"

That last question was an ingenious stroke of Jessie's, for it gave Hannah a double interest in William's apprehension. Not only might Lucy be induced to marry Farmer Grange, but Leonard might marry Jessie, and thus bring the thousand pounds into the family, in a way that, to her own thinking, saved her conscience and her credit, and that her more scrupulous husband need never know; but again the question arose, was Jessie to be trusted?

"If Geordie knew I'd anything to do with it," she said, "he'd never forgive me; I

think, though we've lived together thirty years, he'd turn me into the road."

"What need he -ever know!" said Jessie.
"I'm sure I'd never tell him."

"Oh, Jessie, but you're a thoughtless girl!"

"I can be steady enough when I like," said Jessie.

"If you'd go down on your knees, and swear never to tell who it was that told you!"

"So I will," said Jessie, suiting the action to the word, and flopping down upon both knees.

"You never will, so help you God!"

"I never will, so help me God!" said Jessie.

Whereupon, Mrs. Graham rose from her seat, and taking up her bunch of keys that lay on the table beside her, she bade Jessie follow her to her own bedchamber. When there, having locked the door and shut the window, she opened a trunk that appeared filled with miscellaneous articles, and thrusting her hand to the bottom at one particular corner, she drew up a crumpled letter. It was addressed to Mr. George Graham, and the postmark testified that it had come from London.

"Is it from William Bell?" said Jessie.

"It is," said Hannah; "as sure as you're Jessie Matthieson."

"And what does he say? Does he tell where he is?"

"Not just where he is; but there's a way of finding out," said Hannah. "You see it's not wrote with his own hand; I suppose he was afraid they'd know his writing at the post-office; but when my sister sent up the letter, Geordie happened to be out, and as soon as I saw it, my mind misgave me who it came from, for there's nobody in Lunnun to write to him, and so I opened it."

"And doesn't Mr. Graham know about it?"

"Not he! I never told him a word. He was always too much for William Bell, and, for anything I know, he might have told Lucy of it, and just set her wild again about him, after I've been trying all I can to get him out of her head."

"And what does he say?" inquired Jessie.

"Has it got his own name to it?"

"No, it's got no name. Read it; you see it's mostly to inquire about Leonard. He wants to know if Leonard's at home, or if we know where he is."

"What should he want to know so particular about Leonard for, I wonder."

"You know Leonard saw him in the wood, and I suppose he's afraid he'll be a witness against him. But you see he wants Geordie to write to him, and the letter's to be directed to X. Y. Z., to be left at the post-office till called for; so as he must go to fetch it, if anybody watched the post-office they might lay hold of him."

"That's true," said Jessie; "only it must be somebody that knows him."

"Well, you know him," said Mrs. Graham.

"Yes, I do," said Jessie, thoughtfully, for she had an uneasy sort of feeling about what she was doing; and although the influence that urged her was strong enough to make her betray William, she would have preferred doing it through the intervention of another, to being the immediate actor in the business herself.

"This letter came a week ago," said Hannah; "and he'll be looking for an answer by this time."

"But would Mr. Graham write one if you give him the letter?"

"I've no doubt he would, but I'm not going

to give it him," said Hannah; "I durstn't do it now; but I'll write myself; and you must go back to Lunnun and watch till he comes for it."

All these preliminaries being arranged, and the day appointed on which the letter was to be put into the post, Jessie took her departure, but not without another long and private conference with Hannah, wherein the latter used her utmost efforts to enforce the necessity of caution and secrecy on that giddy head. She also endeavoured, though vainly in both instances, to persuade Jessie and herself that they were doing no more than their duty, in delivering up a criminal to justice, and thus constraining Lucy to do what was so much for her interest and advantage, instead of sacrificing herself to an idle and hopeless attachment; and she concluded by reminding Jessie, that, as by communicating this grand secret she was paving her way to fortune, she, that is Jessie, could in common gratitude do no less than reward Leonard's faithful and long suffering love, by giving him her hand as soon as the affair they were about to embark in was brought to a prosperous conclusion.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Aspatia. "In this place work a quick-sand,
And over it a shallow, smiling water."
MAID'S TRAGEDY.

. . . . for could I but have lived
In presence of you, I had had my end."
PHILASTER.

It was not many days after these secret conferences with Mrs. Graham, that, in accordance with their scheme, Jessie returned to town and communicated the very satisfactory result of her expedition to the person at whose instigation she had undertaken it. "And the letter 'll be in London the day after to-morrow, I suppose," said she.

"It's not a bad plan," said Mr. Jacob Lines; "still, if we're not very sharp, we may miss him. We must be there to-morrow, before

the office opens, for he'll probably go every day to inquire."

"I shouldn't like him to see me," said Jessie.

"Nonsense!" said Jacob; "what does it signify whether he sees you or not, if we get the thousand pounds."

"His mother used to be kind to me when I was a little girl, and they were well off," replied Jessie.

"You know, if I can't trust you with this business," said Jacob, "I shall be obliged to let Mrs. Lines into the secret, for she's the only person that knows him, and she'll have no scruples about it, I'm certain; but then if she's the means of taking him, she'll expect a pretty good slice out of the money, you may rely on it—perhaps all; and there's an end of everything, you know, Jessie. I know my uncle will never give his consent to my marrying you, for the reason I told you, and I durstn't name such a thing to him after promising to marry my cousin Jane. He'd turn me into the street, and what's to become of us then? Never would I allow my adored Jessie to unite herself to a houseless beggar! No; sooner than be guilty of such a selfish unprincipled act, I'd tear myself for ever from

her lovely presence, and fly to the remotest corner of the earth, to live amongst wild beasts and savages, and never behold her again !”

Here Mr. Jacob Lines hit himself a pretty heavy blow upon the breast bone, after which he drew out his pocket handkerchief and blew his nose. Jessie was very much affected, and, finding the argument irresistible, she made no further opposition, but consented to do whatever Jacob desired.

This determination on her part, however, did not prevent her feeling very uncomfortable when she set out the next morning, in company with her lover, for the purpose of lying in wait to betray an old friend. It not unfrequently costs people nearly as much pain to do wrong, as it would to have abjured the wrong, and earned the reward of doing right.

Jacob had his own reasons for not putting himself forward in this business, and therefore when they reached the post-office, he stationed Jessie where she could have a full view of the persons who came to inquire for letters, whilst he walked aside, and placed himself in a less conspicuous situation.

As letters are frequently directed to be left

at the post-office, because for some private and peculiar reasons they cannot be addressed elsewhere, several applicants arrived, who, if Jessie had been of a more observing and reflective turn of mind, might have furnished her with much matter for speculation. There were many who turned away with looks of intense disappointment; others, on receiving the missive they expected, had scarcely patience to step aside before they tore open the paper to devour its contents, whilst, on more than one occasion, the blanched cheek and the shaking of the hand denoted what vivid interests were involved in the result; and there was a young lady stepped out of a hackney coach—a mere girl—not above seventeen, elegantly dressed, and on whose beautiful features a degree of anxiety amounting to agony was depicted, as she advanced to ask if there was “a letter for Mrs. Amelia Smith;” the answer was “No letter;” and as she turned away, the clerks laughed, and said they believed she had been there every day for a month. She returned to the coach, and bidding the man set her down at a fashionable silk mercer’s in Pall Mall, she threw herself back in the

corner, and as the carriage drove off, Jessie saw that she was pressing her handkerchief to her eyes with both hands, as if the cambric could not drink up the tears fast enough. Poor young thing! There was a world of sorrow in that little story! Perhaps there was error too; may be she had loved not wisely, but too well, and he for whom she had sacrificed all, denied her, in her deep agony, so much comfort as a few square inches of paper might convey; and the post-office clerks would laugh, and the friends would forsake, and the world would condemn, and none on earth would pity—but God Almighty would!

However, amongst all the applicants, the one expected did not appear, and Jessie and her lover returned home disappointed; but the next morning saw them at their post again, and as Jessie had been exceedingly tired of her previous day's amusement, she started this time with much less remorse, and much more impatience for success.

"After all, he mightn't come himself," suggested she.

"It's not likely he'd have anybody to send," answered Jacob. "At least, nobody he could trust."

"As the letter couldn't be here till to-day, it couldn't be any of them that got letters yesterday," observed Jessie.

"It 'll most likely be himself that 'll come for it, but probably he'll be disguised," said Lines; "so you must keep your eyes wide open, and if you see anybody the least suspicious, give me a wink."

But nobody that Jessie thought suspicious appeared, and again they returned disappointed. "Perhaps, as he didn't get an answer at first," said Jessie, "he thought Mr. Graham didn't mean to write, and he's left off going."

"If the letter was of consequence to him, I shouldn't think he'd give it up so easily," said Lines. "He'll be sure to try again."

"Most of the people that got letters stood still to read them or opened them as they walked away," said Jessie. "There was just one or two that didn't; there was a man in livery that didn't, and there were some people that got several letters together; and that young girl that was with the old man that played the fiddle. She got a letter and put it in her pocket."

“That’s the girl with the fine voice,” said Lines. “They were there yesterday.”

“She didn’t get any letter yesterday,” said Jessie. “I heard her say so to the old man; but it’s not likely William would know *them*; besides, he’s a Frenchman too.”

“We must try and find out if the letter’s still there,” said Lines. “We can ask for it; and if they give it us, we can say it’s not the one we expect.”

In the meanwhile, Peggy, who had been desired by William to inquire daily for a letter addressed to X. Y. Z., entered their little room at night, with the packet in her hand. As her beloved charge was now recovered from the effects of his wound, she had resumed her daily peregrinations with the old man, for the sake of earning by her sweet voice and her pretty face the money that was indispensable to the support of their little *ménage*; whilst William was anxiously waiting for some tidings from Eastlake, which might decide his plans. His present life was miserable, and the obtaining any means of decent maintenance impossible; whilst the living, and perhaps dying, with the dreadful suspicion of murder attached to his name, was abhorrent to his nature.

He had resolved, therefore, if he could only ascertain that Leonard was safe beyond pursuit, that he would give himself up as a deserter, and take the chance of what should befall him; so with an eager hand he seized the letter and tore it open; the contents ran as follows:—

“DEAREST F,—From the recommendations I brought, I got into a very good situation here with Colonel Felton; but I find the uneasiness of my mind so great, that I shall not be able to keep it; and I’m thinking of going across the water, where my mind will be more at ease; and I should wish you to come with me, if your health is sufficiently recovered to undertake the journey. I’ve got money enough to keep us both there, where living is not so dear; and you are the only person I could be happy with. But I ought not to talk of happiness, for that is what I shall never know again; but I could be more comfortable with you than with anybody else, because you know everything that has happened, which nobody else does; and as it was for your sake I did it, you can excuse me, because you know the provocation I had; though if it was to do

again, not all the world should tempt me. I had a letter from father the other day ; he says he is very well, and he told me a great many things that he has heard, which I'll tell you when we meet, but they're best not put in a letter. Little does he think ! Send me an answer to say if you'll go with me, and be sure and put it into the post yourself. Whenever I have anything particular to say that's private, I shall direct to post-office as agreed ; so that if a letter miscarries, nobody can know who wrote it, nor who it's to, and you must do the same ; and accordingly direct your answer to A. B. C., Post-office, Dover.

“ I remain, my dear F.,

“ Your affectionate,

“ V.”

“ This letter's not for me, Peggy,” said William, when he had glanced his eye over the contents of the sheet. “ You've got hold of a wrong letter.”

“ They gave it me,” said Peggy ; “ and it's directed X. Y. Z.”

“ It certainly is,” said William ; “ but if I had looked at the post-mark I needn't have opened it : it's from Dover.”

"What's it about?" inquired Peggy.

"Why I don't know that that is any business of ours," said William; "however, as I've read it, you may read it if you like. As we don't know who it's from, nor who it's to, it can't make much difference to the right owner, I suppose."

"What an odd letter!" said Peggy.

"It is a very odd letter, indeed," said William. "The writer of it don't seem much better off than I am."

"What shall we do with it?" inquired Peggy.

"That's what I'm thinking about," returned William. "Perhaps the most proper thing will be to take it back to the post-office, and say it's a mistake; but we must seal it up, because, if it's returned open, it may be the means of bringing the writer into trouble, which he seems to have his share of already."

"Then I'll go with it to-morrow," said Peggy; "and if I get another, I'll be sure to look at the post-mark before I bring it away."

"Mr. Mirliflor'll be tired of always going in that direction," said William.

"Non, non," said the old man; "cela m'est égal—it is same to me where I go."

"Mr. Mirliflor is always willing to go any way I like," said Peggy; "aren't you, father?"

"Oui, mon enfant," replied the Frenchman. "You stay with me, I go alway you please; you leave me, I go no way no more."

"But, father, you did very well before you had me with you."

"Non, non; I not do very well, I do very ill; but I had no better. I join sometime other musician, 'cause I am ennuyé to be alone—that is tire—but they are not respectable. I leave them, and am alone again—et puis je m'ennuie encore, I tire again; and I go with some more—a woman—she sing 'Charmant Portrait,' et 'Vous me quittez pour aller à la gloire;' mais!"

"But what did she do, father?"

"Elle n'avait pas des manières honnêtes, mon enfant."

"What's that?" asked Peggy.

"She was rude, grossière; and she beat her littel chile. I want to take littel chile, and bring him up myself; she no let me; so we part."

"But you know, Mr. Mirliflor," said William, "Peggy must return to her parents;

she must not continue to wander about the world in this manner."

"You go, mon enfant?" said the old man, looking beseechingly at Peggy.

"I don't know," said Peggy, "I don't know what's to become of me."

"If you set out in search of me, Peggy," said William, "you can have no motive for continuing this sort of life when I'm gone."

"Gone where? where are you going?" asked Peggy.

"To give myself up as a deserter. I am tired of leading the life of a hunted thief. I'd rather die at once."

"To give yourself up!" said Peggy, turning very pale.

"Yes," replied William; "that is my determination, if the letter I get from Eastlake satisfies me on one point; and I may as well now mention a subject that I have been for some time thinking of. You know there is a large reward offered for my apprehension."

"Yes," said Peggy; "a thousand pounds, and something else besides by the king."

"Well, as this sum is offered, it's as well somebody should have it; and as I have been living a long time at the expense of yourself

and Mr. Mirliflor—that is, upon your earnings—and as I have no means of discharging the debt, I propose that he should give information; it can make no difference to me, you know.”

“Comment?” said Mr. Mirliflor.

“I say, sir, that it could make no difference to me.”

“Halte-là, monsieur,” said the old man, laying down his violin, on which he had been engaged in putting a new string. “It make no difference to you that I betray my guest—que je viole—what you call the hospitality of my roof!”

“But, sir, you look at it in a wrong light,” interrupted William. “I ——”

“Non, monsieur,” broke in the old man; “it is you look to the wrong light; I look to the light of honour—that is the light I walk by all my life when I was young, and now I am old, I walk by him.”

“But you know, sir, I have no means of discharging the debt I owe you.”

“She have discharge him before I see your face,” said Mr. Mirliflor, throwing his arm round Peggy’s waist, and drawing her towards him; “elle est mon enfant, ma fille. She is my chile.”

“ Well, sir, if my proposal offends you——”

“ Oui, monsieur, cela m’offense.”

“ Then, sir, we’ll say no more about it.
But with respect to Peggy——”

“ Eh bien ! mon enfant, you leave me ?”

“ I don’t know,” answered Peggy, crying ;
“ if he goes back to the regiment, I must go
too ; but you can come with us.”

“ Oui,” replied Mr. Mirliflor ; “ où tu vas,
je vais.”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"Nous sommes plus près d'aimer ceux qui nous haïssent,
que ceux qui nous aiment plus que nous ne voulons."—

ROCHEFOUCAULD.

"You do not like them, sir—these tears? Be patient!
They're the expression of a grief that chokes
Itself, and cannot speak."

OLD PLAY.

ON the following morning, Jessie, out of patience at her ill success, and weary of waiting, resolved to settle the question herself, so far, at least, as the ascertaining if the letter was still at the post-office; so walking boldly up, she inquired if there was a letter for X. Y. Z.

"Here's another of them!" said the clerk, laughing, to his companions. "No," said he, to Jessie; "I've no more X. Y. Z.'s. I've just given that young woman the last."

"But this isn't mine," said a faint voice.
"This belongs to somebody else."

"I can't help it," said the clerk. "There was one, yesterday, we gave to a young woman—perhaps that was yours."

"Why, Fanny!" exclaimed Jessie, turning round to look at the person the clerk had addressed; "is that you? My! how you are altered!"

"Ah, Jessie!" said Fanny, looking more surprised than pleased at the recognition; "*you're* looking well, I'm sure! What; are you come to town with the family?"

"I did come to town with them," replied Jessie; "but I've left his lordship's service now."

"Indeed!" said Fanny; "and who do you live with, then?"

"I'm not in service, at all, now," answered Jessie.

"Why, you're not married, Jessie, are you?"

"No," replied Jessie; "not yet."

"Then you are going to be married? Is it to the young man you were engaged to?"

"To him!" said Jessie, contemptuously; "no, indeed! It's to a very different sort of person to him, thank God! But where are you living? Are you still in that place your brother got for you?"

"No," replied Fanny; "I've been very ill, and was obliged to give up my situation."

"Well, you do look ill, to be sure! And where's your brother?"

"He's living at Dover, with a gentleman—Colonel Felton, he's called. But I must be going; and I must give back this letter, for it's not mine. I am sorry I've opened this letter, sir," she said, addressing the clerk; "it's not for me."

"Perhaps this will do for *you*," said the clerk, in a jeering tone, and handing the letter across to Jessie.

"No, sir," replied she, glancing at the postmark, and ascertaining it was from Eastlake.

"Perhaps, if it was my letter you gave to a young woman yesterday, it will be brought back," said Fanny.

"Perhaps so," replied the clerk; "it's impossible to say."

Jessie was very curious to know how it came about that her friend Fanny should be expecting a letter with such a mysterious direction. But Fanny was by no means disposed to be communicative, and evaded the question by turning the tables on Jessie; but

Jessie said, the letter she had inquired for was for a friend, not for herself.

When this day passed, like the preceding, without any appearance of William, Jessie began to be exceedingly weary, and Lines exceedingly savage; whilst they both began to despair of the success of their scheme. Either William had ceased to ask for the letter, or he employed a messenger; and in either case there was an end of their plan for entrapping him. Whatever remorse Jessie had felt in undertaking the business, was now completely swallowed up in her disappointment; whilst, to make the matter worse, her lover scolded her without mercy; asserting that if she had kept her eyes about her, she might have given a pretty good guess at the right person.

"How was I to know," Jessie said, "unless he'd come himself?" But Jacob would not listen to any such excuse; and the dispute was fast approaching to a quarrel, when Jessie suddenly putting a bridle on her wrath, said, nudging Jacob's elbow, "Hush! be quiet a moment! Let's see where they're going."

"Where who's going?" inquired Jacob.

"That singing-girl and the old man. Per-

haps they're going to the post-office. I know she got a letter yesterday. Perhaps it might be Fanny's."

Upon this suggestion, they turned round and followed the objects of their curiosity; but it is not an easy matter to track people through the streets of London by day, much less by night; and long before they reached the post-office, they had lost sight of the chase; so they turned back again, and recommenced their quarrel where they left off. However, fortune, which too often favours the undeserving, had not done with them yet.

In passing through Long Acre, Jessie remembered that, being Saturday night, it was necessary she should purchase some candles, and other articles required for her little ménage; so telling Jacob that he had better go home, as he was in such an ill temper, she turned into a shop where a variety of heterogeneous articles were sold; whilst her ungrateful lover bent his steps to Cheapside. Like other idle, ignorant people who have nothing to do, Jessie was a terrible gossip; and as she frequently visited the shop in question, she had picked up a sort of acquaintance with the dealers themselves, as well as with

some of their habitual customers. So, instead of making her market and retiring, she seated herself on a high stool by the counter, in order to amuse herself with what was going on, and enjoy a little chat.

Here she had not sat long, before who should enter the shop but the old Frenchman and the singing girl, apparently bent upon the same errand as herself, as they made a variety of small purchases; which, having completed and paid for, they were about to withdraw, when the girl stopped and said,

“I forgot the wax.”

“Comment?” said the old man.

“I forgot the wax to seal up that letter again. Have you any wax?” she added, addressing the woman of the shop.

“Wax candles?” said the woman.

“No, sealing-wax,” replied the girl.

“We’ve no sealing-wax; we’ve got plenty of wafers; wont wafers do for you?”

“No,” replied the girl; and turning to the old man, she added, “he said I must get wax, because he tore the paper so, when he opened it, that it wasn’t fit to carry back. That’s why I didn’t take it with me to-night. I wonder where they sell sealing-wax.”

"At the stationer's," replied the woman of the shop. "There's one in King Street."

"Oh, then we can get it as we go along," said the girl, as they quitted the shop.

"I never heerd her speak afore," observed a man with a bricklayer's apron on. "I always took her for a Frenchwoman. That beant her father, then, I suppose?"

"Oh, no," answered the shopkeeper. "I suppose he's her grandfather, or some relation; for I asked her one day how she came to be English, when her father was French, and she said he wasn't her father."

"She's a pretty cretur to sing as ever I heerd," returned the bricklayer. "I stops many a time in the street to listen to her."

"Ay," said an old man, who worked for a bookbinder; "they lodge in the same house I do, and it often cheers me at night, when I'm at work, to hear her warbling away; learning the songs the old man teaches her. He's been something in his own country, I take it, in a different line to what he is here, for he's quite the gentleman in his behaviour."

"I heard he'd been something of a doctor," said a woman; "and when my little Betsy was

ill lately, he gave her something that did her a deal of good ; and when the young woman's brother was so bad, he was just the only doctor he had."

"I didn't know she had a brother," said the shopkeeper. "He doesn't go about with them."

"No," answered the woman. "I rather think he's in some sort of trouble, poor fellow ! for I don't think he's ever set his foot over the threshold since he came ; and they don't seem to be over fond of folks seeing of him. A fine young man too, he is, as ever I clapped my eyes on, and as upright as a dart ; sometimes I think he's been a sodger, and that they'd been flogging on him, or something, for he was uncommon bad when they brought him there first."

"Is he a tall, dark young man?" inquired Jessie.

"He's middling for height," answered the woman ; but as she was about to enter into further particulars, the bookbinder pulled her by the gown, and whispering something to her, she said, "I didn't mean no harm, I'm sure, Mr. Clark. I wouldn't do them a mischief

on no account ; why should I ?" And the conversation diverging into other directions, the party presently dispersed.

" Well," said Jessie to Jacob, when he paid her his Sunday's visit, " I hope you're in a better temper than you was last night."

This hope, however, seemed to be extremely premature, for Jacob was evidently very cross. In short, concluding that their plan had wholly failed, and that Jessie had now no more chance of getting the thousand pounds than anybody else, he had come resolved to pick a quarrel with her, preparatory to getting rid of her altogether ; but Jessie's weakness saved him from this false step, and instead of allowing him to open her eyes, she hastened to smooth his ruffled feathers by detailing the conversation she had overheard the night before, and declaring her conviction that the pretended brother was no other than William. Her persuasion, she said, was founded not only on his being taken for a soldier, and his desire for concealment, but also on the conversation about the letter ; " for," said she, " they told Fanny, at the post-office, that they had given a letter to a young woman yesterday, with the same direction on it, and that it was very likely hers."

We are sorry that a late experiment has proved that oil does not still the waves, because it has robbed us of a comparison ; and not having another at hand, we must content ourselves by simply stating, that the rising storm was instantly allayed by this piece of intelligence, and that Mr. Lines became at once a pattern of sweetness and placidity.

"All you have to do," said Jessie, "is to give information to the magistrates, and then I suppose they'll send somebody to take him."

"That wont do, my little Jessie," answered Jacob. "You must first ascertain to a certainty that he's there."

"I'm certain it's him," said Jessie. "I'd a sort of suspicion about that girl from the first time I saw her asking for letters."

"I dare say it is," replied Lines ; "but we've too much at stake to run any risk ; you must go there and see him. If he's there, you can easily find some excuse ; and if he's not, you can say it's a mistake."

"But I wouldn't have him suspect that I'm going to give him up for the whole world," said Jessie.

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Lines. "What difference can it make to you?"

"It's very easy for you to talk that never had any acquaintance with him," said Jessie.

"Well," said Mr. Lines, "of course you must do as you please. I thought our interest was the same; but if you are indifferent, you shall find I can be indifferent too."

"I'm not indifferent; you know I'm not," answered Jessie; "but people can't help having some feeling."

"Feeling's all very well in its place," returned Jacob; "and I should be sorry anybody could accuse me of wanting feeling; but when you know all our future prospects depend on our bringing this business to a favourable issue, I think we ought to begin by feeling for ourselves."

"I shouldn't mind if it didn't seem so ungrateful," began Jessie again.

"Nobody abhors ingratitude more than I do," returned Jacob; "and I'm the last man in the world to ask you to do anything of that sort; but the truth is, Jessie, I see very well, you wish to be off the business altogether. In that case, let us part at once, and have done with it. I'm not the man to keep any girl to an engagement against her will."

It is needless to observe, that this last argument was decisive; and that Jessie set out on her errand, resolved to make the best of it, disagreeable as it was. Having taken care to ascertain, on the previous evening, where the old bookbinder lived, she had no difficulty in discovering the house, nor in ascertaining that the people she sought occupied the attic story. Thither, therefore, she mounted, and after knocking at one or two doors unsuccessfully, she finally hit upon the right one; and the door being partly opened, a familiar voice inquired "who was there?"

"It's me, William," she said; "it's Jessie Matthieson."

William flung open the door. "Well, Jessie," he said; "what has brought you here? How did you find me out?"

"I found you out by the letter that came to the post-office for you, directed to X. Y. Z. I was there when the girl asked for it; and then I heard some people talking in a shop, and I was sure it was you they were talking about."

"Why, how did you know the letter was for me?"

"Because it was from Eastlake. I saw the post-mark, so I found out where the girl lived, and came to inquire about you."

"Well, and now you see me, I should think you'd hardly know me?"

"I really don't think I should, if it hadn't been for your voice. You *are* altered, to be sure!"

"Well I may be; between uneasiness of mind, and sickness, and confinement, for I never venture out, except a little after dark, I'm weary of my life. A man had better be dead at once, than live as I do. But it sha'n't last; I'm determined to put an end to it."

"Oh, my! You're not going to kill yourself, William?"

"No, no; I'm not going to kill myself; I've something to do before I die; I must clear my character. I don't mean to leave the world with the stain of murder on my name."

"Why, didn't you do it, William?"

"I do it! No, to be sure I didn't. I should have thought you might have known me better, Jessie Matthieson."

"You didn't do it! Well, I'm so glad! Then it won't signify to you whether you're taken or not?"

"Not much; for I am going to give myself up as a deserter; and then, no doubt, they'll try me for the murder."

"And are you sure you can clear yourself?"

"Why, no; I don't know that I am sure; but, at least, if they hang me, I shall die, denying it; whereas, as long as I keep out of the way, it is like acknowledging myself guilty."

"And are you really going to give yourself up, William?"

"I am."

"When?"

"Immediately; I shall leave this to-morrow. Well, Jessie, what are you thinking of?"

"Nothing," replied Jessie, who had evidently fallen into what is called a brown study.

"But what are you doing in London, Jessie? Are you still living with Lord Belton?"

"I came up with the family," answered Jessie, evading the question. "But I was at Eastlake, lately, William."

"Were you?" exclaimed William, eagerly; "and did you see Lucy?"

"Oh, yes! many times; and Leonard, too."

"And what does Lucy say? And how does

she look? Did she speak of me? Did you say you'd seen me?"

"Yes, I told her about it. She's very down about your being suspected, but she said she was sure you didn't do it; and she told the magistrates so."

"And do you know, Jessie, if she has any suspicion of anybody?"

"I don't think she has; she didn't mention anybody to me. You know, Leonard was suspected, till he came back and gave himself up to the magistrates."

"So I learn from the letter," said William.

"And how did Leonard seem?"

"I thought he looked very ill," answered Jessie; "but Mrs. Graham said he'd soon look better, if I'd go back to Eastlake."

"And why don't you go, Jessie? Why do you torment him in the way you do, when you know he's so little able to bear it?"

"I have no thoughts of Leonard, now," answered Jessie. "Leonard and I should never do together."

"I don't think you would, indeed," replied William; "but you ought to tell him so, and not keep him in suspense."

"I'll tell him so soon," answered Jessie,

somewhat absently; for her mind had again reverted to the business she had come about.

"Do you know, Jessie, I think you have something on your mind," said William; "I never saw you so grave before."

"Me? no!" replied Jessie; "I haven't got anything on my mind."

"I hope you're not in any scrape, Jessie? you were always a thoughtless girl."

"No, I'm not in any scrape," said Jessie, in a tone, however, which was far from bringing conviction to William's mind; "but I must be going."

"Well, good bye to you, Jessie! It's more than probable we shall never meet again," said William, taking hold of her hand; "for whether I'm doomed to meet the fate of a deserter, or of an assassin, my life will probably not be long; but when you see Lucy, tell her of this interview, and say that my heart has never swerved from her through all my troubles, and that it will be faithful to her to the last."

"I will," answered Jessie, in a faltering voice.

"And with respect to yourself, Jessie, take my advice, and be more steady. If you're in

a respectable situation, and your friends know where you are, it's all very well; but a girl had need to take care of herself in those large houses, where there are so many men-servants. I wish you were well married, Jessie, to a respectable steady man that would take care of you. I'm sure there's something wrong with you," he continued, for Jessie was now crying ready to break her heart, at the thoughts of her own treachery. "Tell me what it is! If I can do nothing else for you, I may advise you. You know my poor mother was always fond of you, Jessie, and I feel an interest in you for her sake, besides our old acquaintance."

"No, no, there's nothing at all!" sobbed Jessie. "Good bye! Do you go away to-morrow very early?"

"Yes, as soon as it's light."

"You'll be sure to go?"

"Yes, quite sure. Why?"

"Nothing. I think you're right to go. Good bye, William!"

"Good bye, Jessie! and remember to give my message to Lucy when I am dead."

"If," thought Jessie, as she descended the stairs, wiping her eyes—"if I can prevent Jacob's telling the police about it till to-

morrow, William will be gone, but as that's an accident he can't help, I should think they'll give him the money all the same; and if they do overtake him on the road, William will never think I've told, and it won't make much difference to him whether he's taken or not, as he's going to give himself up. I wish I could keep from telling Jacob till to-morrow where he is; but Jacob will be so impatient! I've half a mind to go to Fanny's and stay, or to go to my aunt's, and not go back till it's too late—only if Jacob was to find it out he'll be angry; but then he won't know but what I'm looking for William all the time. At any rate, I'll go to Fanny's for a little while;" and with this determination she was just turning in the direction of Fanny's house, when she felt her arm seized, and the voice of Lines whispered in her ear, "Have you found him?"

"Oh, my! Jacob, how you frightened me!" said Jessie.

"Never mind being frightened—have you found him, I say?"

"No—yes—at least I know where he is; but la! Jacob, what made you come after me?"

"Because I see you're a fool, and that you'll

let him slip after all the trouble I've taken. Where is he?"

"He's in a house near here; but I've something to say to you, Jacob."

"Which house? Is it in this street?"

"I'll tell you presently—there's no hurry; and I want you to do a thing to oblige me."

"Well, what is it? Make haste!" But the utter hopelessness of making the request she had contemplated, struck so forcibly on Jessie's mind, that she had not courage to propose it, and she remained silent.

"There's something in this I don't like," exclaimed Lines, becoming furious with the fear of losing what was almost within his grasp, and he stopped short and looked her sternly in the face; "do you mean to tell me where he is or not? or do you mean to let him get away first, for d—n me! but that's what I suspect you're after?"

"He's in that house I just come out of," answered Jessie, crying, but too frightened to withhold her information longer.

"Did you see him?"

"Yes, I did, and spoke to him."

"And told him, I suppose, what you were come about?"

"No, I didn't," replied Jessie. "I said I had found out where he was, and had come to see him."

"Very well; then now I must stay here and watch, in case he should go out, whilst you go to the police office."

"He never goes out," said Jessie; "he told me so, except when it's quite dark."

"Still it will be better not to lose sight of the house. How does he look? What's he dressed in? I'm not sure that I should know him again."

"I didn't know that you'd ever seen him," said Jessie, looking up at him with some surprise.

"I believe I have, but it's a good while ago," answered Lines, evasively. "But what has he got on?"

"A shabby old black coat, a great deal too large for him."

"Ha!" said Lines, with a laugh, "I shall be able to give a guess at him then if he comes out. Well, then, now you set off to Marlborough-street office — do you know your way?"

"No, I don't."

"Then take a hackney coach, and tell them

that if they will send a couple of officers with you, you'll lead them to where William Bell is. But mind, Jessie, you're to say nothing about me whatever—don't think of mentioning my name in any way; and if you see me about here when you return, don't look at me, or take any notice of me. I'm to have nothing to do with it, you know."

"Very well," answered Jessie, despondingly.

"And now set off; you oughtn't to be gone more than half an hour. Take a coach at the first stand you come to." And Jessie moved her unwilling feet away.

Soon after this Mr. Mirliflor and Peggy returned from the Catholic chapel, where they had been to morning service, eager to learn to what decision William had arrived, after considering the contents of his letter.

"To-morrow morning!" exclaimed Peggy, turning pale when he announced his resolution. "Oh, William!"

"I may as well do at oncè what I have resolved to do," answered William. "I only wish I had thought of writing to Eastlake before; I might have saved myself a great deal of useless suffering; I should either have been dead or out of my troubles by this time.

And now, Peggy, we must speak of your affairs: you must return to your father and mother, Peggy."

But Peggy could answer only by sobs; her head was resting on the table, and her face was buried in her handkerchief; whilst Mr. Mirliflor sat silently by, with his violin resting on his knee, drawing his thumb unconsciously across the strings, and producing low sad tones, in unison with the feelings that affected him at the sight of Peggy's grief.

"I cannot think of leaving you in this situation. Whatever is to be my fate, you know, Peggy, we must part." Peggy's tears flowed on, and Mr. Mirliflor's accompaniment continued in the same tone.

"You must be conscious, Peggy, that your leaving your parents was a very improper step; and you may think yourself very fortunate that it has led to nothing worse than it has done."

Mr. Mirliflor, *un poco piu forte*.

"I couldn't help it," murmured Peggy from behind her handkerchief.

"But that's a very bad excuse for people doing what they ought not to do. If that plea were to be admitted in extenuation,

people might do anything they liked, however wrong."

"I don't want to do anything wrong," said Peggy. "You went away from the regiment, William, because you couldn't help it."

Mr. Mirliflor, *un poco giocoso*.

"That's true, Peggy; I did what was very wrong; and, accordingly, you see how I've suffered for it."

"I should have suffered much more if I'd stayed behind," said Peggy. "I've been a great deal happier since I came away than I was before, especially lately."

"But now that's at an end, Peggy; and the time is come that we must part." Here Peggy's swollen heart found vent in a sob.

Mr. Mirliflor, *dolce con espressione*.

"I am thinking what will be the best way for you to go," said William.

"Mayn't I go with you?" said Peggy, lifting up her tearful face.

"No," answered William; "that would not be proper. Besides, I shall go to the Horse Guards and give myself up at once."

"Then you'll have to march down to the regiment, and I might go at the same time," urged Peggy.

"Think what an appearance that would have, Peggy."

"I don't care what appearance it has," said Peggy, "if you'll let me go."

"I can't, indeed," replied William. "It would be very discreditable to me, as well as to you. I should be very sorry to give people reason to suppose that I have encouraged you in this folly."

Mr. Mirliflor, un poco crescendo.

"Nobody shall think you've encouraged me. They all know at the regiment that I came away after you were gone, and when you couldn't know anything about it."

"You know, Peggy, my life will probably be very short; you are young, and have many years before you, I hope. When I am dead, you'll get over this foolish romantic attachment—"

"No, I sha'n't," interposed Peggy.

"You think so now, but you will; and I hope you'll attach yourself to some sensible, good man, that will know how to take care of you; and then you will be much obliged to me for not having allowed you to expose yourself as you want to do."

"I *have* exposed myself," answered Peggy;

"and what's the use of making me miserable now for what can't be mended?"

"But how wrong I should be thought for allowing you to do it!"

"No, you sha'n't; I'll tell everybody that you tried to prevent me, but I would have my own way."

"But only reflect how foolish this perseverance is!" said William. "I can't understand it, when you know, Peggy—"

"Never mind understanding it," answered Peggy; "only don't make me more miserable than there's need for."

"That you should continue thus to sacrifice yourself for a man who, as I have told you before, cannot—"

"Oh!" exclaimed Peggy; "haven't you told me that often enough? Did I ever ask you to love me? Don't I know you love somebody else? And even if you hadn't, you'd never have loved me. I know that very well. Men never love women that don't love themselves."

Mr. Mirliflor, pensieroso.

"But it's your duty to love yourself, Peggy; at least, to respect yourself."

"I dare say it is," answered Peggy; "and I'm sure it would be for my own interest,

every way, if I could do it; but I can't help my own feelings. People that can, must be very different to me, and I'm sure they must be a great deal happier;" a reflection that elicited another bitter sob from poor Peggy's bosom.

Mr. Mirliflor, *con melanconia*.

"A great deal may be done by a strong effort," said William.

"Some people mayn't be able to make strong efforts," said Peggy; "and, perhaps, those that succeed, don't need them so *very* strong. Nobody can judge what's in another person's heart; and people may be praised for doing what didn't cost them much trouble; and others may be blamed for not doing what it wasn't in their power to do. If I asked you to love me, William, you might very well be cross to me, and I couldn't blame you; but you know all I ask is, that you'd be kind to me, and let me love you; that would be happiness enough for me."

Mr. Mirliflor, *dolce amoroso*.

"But, you know, my life is drawing to a close, Peggy——"

"Then," said Peggy, rising from her seat, and throwing herself on her knees before him,

whilst she clasped her hands in an agony of grief, and the tears streamed over her face—"then be merciful to me whilst you live! Don't leave me nothing but sorrow and pain, and thoughts of your unkindness——"

Mr. Mirliflor, *agitato*.

"Get up, Peggy!" said William; "this is very disagreeable. I detest scenes and tears, and all that sort of thing. It's rather the way to make me like you less than more."

"Oh!" groaned out Peggy, in anguish of heart, whilst she covered her face with her hands.

Mr. Mirliflor, *molto agitato*.

"Get up from your knees, Peggy, and re-collect yourself!"

"You make me miserable!" sobbed Peggy, "and then you blame me for being so."

Mr. Mirliflor, *passionato*.

"You should not have attached yourself, Peggy, to a man that never gave you any encouragement. I got acquainted with you, in the regiment, as I should with any other girl that I didn't care about, and I was civil to you, as I should be to any other woman; but, as I have told you before, you're not a girl I should ever fancy——"

"Oh, my God! my God!" cried Peggy.

Mr. Mirliflor, *con furore*.

"This is very painful!" said William, turning away his head.

"Then why are you so cruel to me?" urged Peggy. "It's you make me do it."

"I am not cruel to you," answered William. "I only want you to give up this folly, and be reasonable."

"But you're so hard, William! I am always reasonable when you are kind. I could even give up going with you if you would ask me gently, and if you would promise that I shall see you again before—before——"

"Before I die?"

"Yes!" sobbed Peggy, again covering her face with her hands.

"I don't like making promises," began William.

"*Ecoutez, monsieur!*" said Mr. Mirliflor, laying down his violin, and approaching William. "If this chile was sick, *son corps*—that is, her body—had the fever, and she was thirst, you give her drink—*n'est-ce-pas?*"

"Certainly," answered William.

"If you have it not, you fetch it, you beg it, you buy it—*n'est-ce-pas?*"

"Certainly," replied William; "if she was ill, common humanity would oblige me to supply her wants as far as I was able."

"Eh, bien!" continued Mr. Mirliflor; "she is sick of the mind, and she has thirst for the words that heal."

"But, sir," said William, "you wouldn't have me encourage her in this foolish attachment?"

"Non, monsieur, c'est autre chose. Les vieux medecins—the physician, formerly, when a patient have the fever—the small pox—cover him up and keep him warm—that make his pain worse—mais, 'it is to cure him,' dit le medecin—mais cette guerison là c'est la mort. Oh, sare, give cool drink to the fever, and soft words to the wounded heart!"

"Hark!" said Peggy, raising her head from the table where it was resting; "I hear people on the stairs; there's somebody coming;" and she moved to the door and turned the key.

"Who's there?" she asked, as some one from without attempted to lift the latch.

"It's only me!" answered a female voice, in a faltering tone. "I want to speak to William Bell!"

"It's Jessie Matthieson!" said William.
"Open the door!"

"Well, Jessie," said William, "what has brought you back? What's the matter?" added he, sharply, for a second glance at her face shewed him that there *was* something the matter.

"Is there any place to get out by the roof? Is there a gutter outside the window?" she said, hurriedly, as she closed the door behind her.

"Why?" asked William.

"If there is, go!" she said; "go, this instant, for they're coming to take you."

"Who is?"

"The constables."

"Open the door, and let them come!" said William.

"Oh, no—no!" cried Jessie; "go—go. If you don't, I shall never be happy again."

"What!" said William; "is it you have brought them here?"

"I've been forced to it!" answered Jessie, weeping bitterly. "Oh, that I'd never lived to see this day!"

"It makes little difference to me, Jessie," said William; "but I'm shocked for you. I

thought there was something wrong, you're not dressed like a decent maid-servant, nor like an honest girl. Where are the officers?"

"On the stairs. I said I'd come first and see if you were here, that I might give you time to go."

"I'm sorry for you, Jessie; you'll repent this act as long as you live, and you'll be despised for it; it isn't me you injure, it's yourself."

"I know it!" sobbed Jessie.

"You must have got into some very bad connexions before you'd do such a thing as this, I'm sure," said William. "Giddy and vain you always were, but I never thought you bad-hearted. However, let this be a warning to you; you can't save me, but, in God's name, Jessie Matthieson, save yourself! Repent of your folly and your wickedness; go back to your mother, and atone for the past by behaving better for the future. Open the door, Peggy!"

"I wouldn't wish you to escape," said Peggy, firmly, "for that would look as if you were guilty. God bless you, William!" she said, falling at his feet. "Forgive me all the trouble I've given you. Remember, it was all

my foolish love, that I couldn't help. Think of me kindly while you're in this world, and when you're in the next, if they take away your life, look down upon me and pity me! Then you'll know how dearly I loved you. Give me one kiss!"

"Good-bye, Peggy!" said William, raising and kissing her. "Endeavour to forget me, and fix your affections more wisely for the future. Mr. Mirliflor, sir," he added, holding out his hand to the old man, "good-bye! I am under great obligations to you——"

"Non—non," said the old man, as the tears dropped from his eyes—"non; j'aurais fait bien plus pour cette pauvre enfant. Adieu, monsieur!"

"You'll see her safe to her friends, I'm sure," said William. "I needn't ask you to promise me that."

"Oui, monsieur; n'ayez pas peur; je ferai mon devoir. Fear not for her."

"Oh, William!" said Peggy, clasping her hands.

"Hush!" said he. "God bless you both! And for you, Jessie Matthieson, I forgive you freely. Go, and do better for the future. Farewell!" and having shaken hands all round,

and permitted poor Peggy to throw her arms round his neck and press him to her heart, for the first and last time in her life, he flung open the door, and calling up the officers, delivered himself into their hands.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

“Though some make light of libels, yet you may see by them how the wind sits : as, take a straw and throw it up into the air, you shall see by that which way the wind is, which you shall not do by casting up a stone. More solid things do not shew the complexion of the times so well as ballads and libels.”—SELDEN.

IN the meantime, whilst these things were acting in London, the new tenants of Eastlake Castle had been making acquaintance with their neighbours, and had themselves become to these same neighbours a source of infinite curiosity, wonder, perplexity, admiration, approbation, disapprobation, condemnation,—and, in one word, gossip.

“What do you think of them, Lady Dalton?” inquired Mrs. Grenville.

“Why, it would take a long time to tell

what I think, in detail," replied Lady Dalton, "but if you will accept my opinion *en gros*, I like them very well."

"I think he's so handsome!" said Miss Dalton.

"Has been, you mean," rejoined Lionel Lorton, who was young, and thought himself very good looking.

"Oh, no, I don't," replied Miss Dalton. "I think he never can have been handsomer than he is now; perhaps never so handsome."

"Young ladies have certainly an extraordinary taste in beauty," said Augustus Dalton, her brother. "They appear to find a particular charm in wrinkles and grey hair."

"No, we don't," replied Miss Dalton; "but we find a particular charm in expression, which, in men especially, is extremely apt to improve with age; and grey hairs and wrinkles cannot spoil it."

"But Mr. Rivers must have been handsome at every period of his life," observed Lady Dalton; "and although he looks prematurely old, and bears in his countenance the marks of much suffering, the noble features and the lofty expression still remain."

"It is very singular that the latter *should*

remain in a man who has passed his life at the gaming table," remarked Sir James Dalton.

"Why," said Lord Lorton, "Rivers differed at play from almost any man I have ever seen. He encountered both good and ill fortune with extraordinary equanimity. He never lost his temper, and never seemed much depressed or much elated."

"It is very singular that a man should have risked all he had, and reduced himself and his family to beggary, for what afforded him so little excitement," said Lady Dalton.

"I don't say that play did not afford him excitement," returned Lord Lorton, "but only that that excitement never amounted to intoxication or despair. He seemed generally absorbed in calculations; and I have heard it suggested that his love of play arose less from the desire of gain, or the need of excitement, than from the curiosity of a speculative mind that delighted in the doctrine of chances; in which case the results, though equally pernicious as regarded his fortune and the prospects of his family, would be less injurious to his own character."

"His wife and daughters seemed extremely attached to him," said Lady Dalton.

"I don't wonder at it; he's so graceful and so elegant," said Miss Dalton.

"Well, I should care very little for the graces and elegances of a man who had reduced me to beggary, nor for his beauty either," said Miss Grieves, a maiden lady of large fortune and small mind.

"I don't agree with you," said Lady Dalton. "It would be no consolation to be reduced to beggary by a brute, but a great aggravation, I think."

"Assuredly," said Lady Lorton; "every virtue—and grace and elegance are minor virtues—must be taken into the account, and subtracted from the amount of ill."

"Besides, we can bear so much for the sake of those we love," rejoined Miss Dalton; "and Mr. Rivers is so lovable."

"Yes," replied Lady Dalton, "think how much resentment must have been subdued, and how much forbearance and forgiveness engendered by his amenities."

"In fine, ladies," said Mr. Grenville, "we are to understand that, provided a gentleman be handsome, graceful, and elegant, he may reduce his family to the workhouse, without

having anything to apprehend from the condemnation of the fair sex."

"That is exactly a specimen of the sort of logic gentlemen reserve for the use of the fair sex, as you are pleased to call us," replied Lady Dalton. "I condemn his gambling extremely, as every rational human being must; but there are various ways of making people miserable, and we need not have them all heaped upon us at a time; but you're jealous of Mr. Rivers because all the ladies are in love with him."

"I'm sure I'm not in love with him," said Miss Grieves.

"That's because he's not in love with you, aunt," said Miss Dalton.

"Well," said Miss Grieves, with a significant toss of the head, "time will shew!"

"What will it shew, aunt?" said Miss Dalton.

"Whose opinion of this *rara avis* is most correct, Miss Emily—yours or mine."

"Mrs. Rivers has had some years' experience of his character," replied Miss Dalton, who was one of those young ladies, not very rare, who think elderly men much more agreeable

than young ones, and who look upon fifty, amongst the lords of the creation, as the prime of life, "and I'm sure she adores him."

"She's a very sweet person, Mrs. Rivers," said Lord Lorton.

"You knew her, I suppose, before she was married?" said Sir James.

"A little," said Lord Lorton. "She was one of the prettiest creatures in London."

"And had an immense fortune, hadn't she?" said Miss Grieves.

"Very considerable," returned Lord Lorton.

"It's a pity she couldn't take better care of it," rejoined the lady.

"Well, she has got another immense fortune now," said Miss Dalton, "to make her amends for the one she lost."

"Ah," said Miss Grieves, "she has indeed; and much good may it do her!"

"Amen!" said Miss Dalton.

"I heard yesterday," said Mrs. Grenville, "that Miss Rivers had refused Sir Everard Lane."

"I'm very glad of it!" said Lord Lorton. "She has refused a coxcomb."

"If what he said is true," observed Miss Dalton, "I wonder he had the *hardiesse* to present himself at Eastlake."

"It is quite true," said Lionel Lorton. "Although he had been paying his addresses to her for a considerable time, he never made the slightest effort to see her, after the break-up, till they came down here."

"And he with such a large fortune!" exclaimed Miss Dalton.

"I think he was very right," said Miss Grieves. "If he had married her, he would have brought the whole family upon his back."

"Many people, where there was not a very confirmed attachment, might have hung back from that apprehension," said Lady Dalton, "but few, I should think, would have had the effrontery to come forward again."

"I wonder how Charles Danby stands there!" said Augustus Dalton. "I know he was paying his addresses to one of them when they were in Grafton-street."

"I heard Russell say," said Lionel, "that Danby had behaved extremely well; but that Miss Rivers—I believe it was the second—would not have anything to say to him."

"What Russell are you speaking of?" inquired Augustus. "Is it Corney Russell?"

"No, Harry Russell—a cousin of Mrs. Chester's; he's at the bar. He was violently in

love with the eldest Miss Rivers at the time that Lane was paying his addresses to her; but poor Russell never had a hundred pounds in his life, I'm afraid, nor a brief either."

"Who in the world is that strange, tall, awkward man they've got staying there?" inquired Lady Dalton.

"Oh, that I can tell you," said Mrs. Grenville; "he's an artist. They have got him down for the purpose of making a series of sketches of the different points of view, both of the Castle and from it."

"He's a very odd-looking person!" said Lady Dalton.

"Well, mamma, I rather like him," said Miss Dalton. "He's so modest, and so nervous, that I dare say he's a genius."

"What is his name?" inquired Lord Lorton.

"I never heard him called anything but Mr. Elias," said Mrs. Grenville, "but whether that's his Christian or surname, I did not learn."

"You dined there the day before yesterday, didn't you?" inquired Lady Dalton of Mrs. Grenville.

"Yes, we did; there were no visitors but ourselves."

"It's singular how little company they see, considering they were formerly in the habit of seeing so much, when they could not afford it nearly so well," observed Mr. Grenville.

"I don't think it strange," said Lady Lorton. "People do not easily get over the effects of such a *coup de foudre* as sent them from Grafton Street to a miserable lodging in the purlieus of the King's Bench. Besides, it must have taught them the hollowness of the world, and of worldly friendships."

"Rivers himself seems to have no pleasure in society whatever," observed Mr. Grenville.

"No wonder!" responded Miss Grieves.

"To a man who has spent so much of his life at the gaming-table, ordinary society cannot afford sufficient excitement," said Sir James.

"Still, it would offer more than the retirement in which they live," responded his wife.

"Mr. Rivers appears to me to be extremely nervous," rejoined Mrs. Grenville.

"Did you observe, ma'am," inquired Miss Grieves, "the morning I met you calling there, how he changed countenance when the butler came in, and said that a stranger wished to speak to him?"

"I didn't hear what the servant said," replied Mrs. Grenville.

"I did, ma'am," returned Miss Grieves. "I listened very attentively to the conversation. Mr. Rivers inquired what sort of man he was, and what he said, and what he wanted."

"I don't see anything singular in that," said Sir James Dalton. "I very often do the same thing, when people don't send up their names."

"Very likely," returned Miss Grieves; "but you don't look as frightened as if you were told there was a constable come to take you up. Besides, I've heard other people mention it. I'm not the only person that observes it."

"Mention what? Observe what?" inquired the company.

"The extraordinary state of that gentleman's nerves."

"Well, what of that?" said Miss Dalton. "I'm sure, poor man, he has had enough to shake his nerves!"

"You're quite infatuated with that man, Emily," said Miss Grieves, "and wont see anything but what you like."

"What is there to see?" inquired Miss Dalton.

"None are so blind as those that wont see," responded Miss Grieves; "and none so dull as those that wont understand."

"Well, aunt, you know I detest inuendos; and I never do understand them."

"Oh, well, I've done!" said Miss Grieves.

"Then you'd better never have begun," said Miss Dalton.

"Well, ladies, I'll wish you good morning," said Miss Grieves, getting up, with an offended air.

"Good morning!" returned the ladies, whilst one gentleman rang the bell and another opened the door.

"Your aunt will certainly go home and alter her will, Emily," said Sir James Dalton to his daughter.

"She has probably altered it long ago," replied Miss Dalton. "It has not been for want of provocation if she has not."

"I shall be the gainer," said Augustus. "When Emily begins a skirmish of that sort with Aunty Grieves, I make it a rule to observe an inviolable neutrality; by which pru-

dent generalship I hope, at least, to keep the fortune in the family. If I were as impolitic as my sister, she'd leave it to endow an hospital."

"Well, I cannot endure her mode of attacking people," said Miss Dalton. "If she has anything to say against them, it would be much less offensive to me if she would speak out at once, and let us judge for ourselves. She may hum and ha away anybody's character in that manner, whilst one don't know in what direction to parry her assaults. I'm sure I don't know what she means to imply about Mr. Rivers; do you, papa?"

"Something very absurd and extravagant, I dare say," returned Sir James.

"He has made arrangements for paying all his debts, I understand," said Lord Lorton; "therefore he can have nothing unpleasant to expect on that score."

"I don't think it's his debts that Miss Grieves alludes to," said Mrs. Grenville.

"What is it, then?" inquired Miss Dalton. "She's angry because they have never asked her to dinner, in my opinion."

"You know Miss Grieves goes a good deal to Lady Eastlake," replied Mrs. Grenville;

“and Lady Eastlake and old Nelly, the nurse, bear Mr. Rivers an implacable enmity.”

“Then it’s some history of theirs, I suppose, that she is desirous of circulating.”

“I rather think it is.”

“If Mr. Rivers had not inherited the estate, somebody else would,” said Miss Dalton. “Lady Eastlake would not have had it; and I understand he offered, in a very liberal manner, to increase her jointure.”

“Which she refused, indignantly,” said Lady Lorton; “but that does not diminish his merit in making the proposal.”

“She might, at least, forbear injuring his character,” said Mrs. Grenville.

“But how can she injure it?” inquired Miss Dalton. “I don’t see what she can say of him, except that he likes retirement, and sees little company.”

“Why,” said Mrs. Grenville, who, although very far from being an Auntie Grieves, did like a little bit of gossip, “I have heard something of a report that seems to have originated in that quarter; but it’s almost too extravagant to repeat.”

“You had better not repeat it, then, my dear,” said Mr. Grenville.

"I'm sure I wouldn't," returned his wife, "if I were not certain that nobody here will believe it, and that they will not fail to hear it from other quarters; for when a piece of scandal once gets amongst the lower orders, it's sure to spread."

"That it certainly is," said Lady Lorton.

"And they always take the worst view of the case," rejoined Lady Dalton. "With them, a flirtation's invariably an intrigue, and a visit to the Continent a flight from your creditors."

"But Mr. Rivers hasn't any flirtation, has he?" said Miss Dalton.

"Emily's getting jealous," said Augustus.

"Oh, no," rejoined Mrs. Grenville, "there's no flirtation in the case, that I know of. What I heard was a very different sort of story."

"Well, as aunt Grieves will be certain to repeat it to everybody that will listen to her, do tell us what it is, Mrs. Grenville!" said Miss Dalton. "We shall, at least, have the advantage of being prepared to contradict it."

"I can't imagine that Lady Eastlake would countenance the report herself," said Mrs. Grenville; "but I'm afraid her enmity to Mr. Rivers is so great, that she does not restrain

Nelly's tongue as she ought to do; and Nelly, with her Irish vehemence, doesn't stop to think of the mischief she may do; but she certainly has, to various people, thrown out very unpleasant insinuations about poor Sir John's death."

"You don't mean to say that she accuses Mr. Rivers of shooting him?" said Miss Dalton.

"Not far from it, I believe," replied Mrs. Grenville.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Miss Dalton. "Poor aunt Grieves! What a fine story for her, to be sure! I don't suppose she ever had such a godsend before."

"It's very absurd," said Lady Lorton; "but at the same time it's extremely improper that such a calumny should be allowed to circulate."

"It's infamous!" said Lord Lorton. "It must not be permitted."

"Oh, by the bye," said Lionel, "I forgot to mention it; but I heard just now that the man's taken!"

"What man?"

"The deserter. He was found concealed somewhere in London, and was traced by means of a letter that was addressed to him."

"That will spoil Aunt's story," said Miss Dalton.

"I am extremely glad the man's found," said Sir James; "for, to say the truth, I had heard of this piece of malice of Lady Eastlake's, and was debating whether Rivers ought not to be informed of it before it spread further."

"But you don't mean to say Lady Eastlake would countenance such a calumny, do you?" said Lady Lorton.

"I'm afraid she can't be altogether exonerated," replied Sir James. "I've reason to believe that she made some attempt, in the first instance, to direct suspicion to that quarter; but the magistrates, of course, wouldn't hear of it."

"That old woman's tongue ought to be stopped," said Lord Lorton; "I mean the nurse."

"If you can find any recipe for stopping an old woman's tongue," said Mr. Grenville, "you'll deserve well of your country, Lorton."

"If Lionel's news is correct," said Lady Lorton, "the scandal will die away of itself."

"Yes, if this man proves to be the real murderer," said Lady Dalton.

"He must be," said her daughter. "There doesn't appear the slightest grounds for suspecting anybody else, since young Graham was acquitted."

"Oh, no; he's the man, beyond all doubt," said Sir James. "I'm very glad they've got him."

CHAPTER XXXV.

"Die Zeit bringt Rosen."

"Sweet country life, to such unknown,
Whose lives are others', not their own!
But serving courts and cities, be
Less happy, less enjoying thee."

HERRICK.

WHEN Elias Longfellow awoke one morning, and found himself a visitor at Eastlake Castle, he felt like some peasant swain, who, in the days of good fairyhood, suddenly saw himself translated into a prince; and when sweet Mary Rivers smiled upon him and encouraged him, the hand of the beneficent fairy seemed still more visible, and the delusion more perfect; for that such a change of scene and circumstances should have been brought about by any natural concatenation of events, seemed to

him impossible. He, the neglected, the despised, the poverty-stricken, the ungainly, the shame-faced—that he should find himself the guest, and the cherished guest, of the affluent, the elegant, the beautiful, the refined, seemed too much to believe. Instead of his low-roofed garret and his truckle bed, he was surrounded by all the splendours and luxuries that wealth and art can furnish, and instead of the dingy atmosphere and noisome street, which were wont to meet his eyes, he looked out on velvet lawns and beds of sun-lit flowers! And here he dwelt in this paradise, from day to day, and from month to month! He was engaged to take an interminable series of views.

At first, he was very awkward, very shy, and very uneasy; but his improvement in these particulars, was much more rapid than could have been anticipated. His awkwardness and his shyness had been the result of an over-sensitive nature, feeling itself misplaced and undervalued. As we observed on his first introduction, he had been always conscious that there was something in him which was stifled and depressed by ill-fortune, but which a more genial atmosphere might have brought out; and accordingly, he was no sooner re-

lieved from the pressure, than his spirits and his genius rose. And he was now living amongst those who could appreciate his genius—his virtues they had learnt to know before. And he had a fine library at his command, and full leisure to enjoy it; and he read early and late, and upon the little foundation laid in at a grammar-school, he daily built up something, till he was in a fair way of becoming a good scholar. Then there was a tour to the Continent proposed, and Elias, in quality of artist, was to be of the party, in order that he might make sketches of the most interesting objects and places they visited; and all these delights were garnished and adorned by Mary's smiles, to whom he also gave lessons in drawing, and who would say to him sometimes, when, for the purpose of sketching from nature they were seated on some beautiful green spot that commanded a view of the wide domain and the noble antique castle, "Ah, Mr. Elias, do you remember the evening you came to our door with the letter, offering to find us a shelter for our shelterless heads? That dreadful Saturday night, when all our money was gone, and the agent had stopped payment, and we had been sitting in the dark, watching with

envy the poor people of the neighbourhood making their little marketings, thinking how much happier they were than we; and we didn't know where to look for help, till you came, like a good angel, to succour us. How little we thought what a change awaited us!"

"And, then, the tea-party, Miss Mary; the first time I ever had the happiness of being in your company. I often think of the tea-party."

"So do I, Mr. Elias. That dreadful Mrs. Wood and Mrs. Fitzhugh, and that poor little Mrs. Twopenny. By the way, I think we ought to do something for that poor little woman. When you go to town, you shall call and inquire about her."

"Oh, happy, happy days!"

And then, at length, Russell came—the noble, disinterested Henry Russell. He held off for a long time, and declined the invitation, for he distrusted his own firmness and powers of endurance. He did not know whether his heart had been read, but he had never declared himself during the period of their adversity, for he was waiting till a hope was fulfilled, a hope he had for some time been indulging, that his cousin, Mrs. Chester, would succeed

in procuring him a little appointment she had applied for to a friend in office, which would have enabled him to maintain a wife respectably; especially as it was not incompatible with his holding a brief whenever he could get one. He had got the office now, but it had come too late; the bird he would have caged, had flown, and stretched her wings to loftier regions than he could lift his eye to. To speak of his love now, would seem as if he were taking advantage of his late services and attentions, a thing he would not be suspected of for the world; besides, he heard from Charles Danby that Sir Everard Lane intended to renew his addresses. But, by and by, Sir Everard came back plucked; and Russell received a letter from Mrs. Rivers, which, besides her name, bore the signatures of Caroline, Ellen, and Mary; saying that they thought his refusal to come to Eastlake exceedingly unkind, &c. &c.; and then his resolution gave way, and, like resolutions in general that have been backed up to make a fight, when it did begin to go, it melted like snow. He took a place in the mail for that very evening, and arrived unheralded at the Castle gate; but when the drawing-room door was thrown open,

and the servant announced Mr. Henry Russell, the general and joyful cry of surprise that greeted him, and Caroline's earnest welcome, were sufficient to have repaid him for years of self-denial.

It is not everybody that learns wisdom in adversity, but Mrs. Rivers and her daughters had; for there had been a good foundation to go upon. They had passed through the valley of darkness, but when they came into the light again, their eyes were not dazzled; their sight was strengthened, and they saw the world as it was; and the people of the world they read, even in the smallest print. They did not undervalue either the world, or the world's people, for that would not have been wisdom or clear-seeing; but they sifted the corn from the chaff, and the true gems from the false stones. They preferred the lawns and woods of Eastlake, to the crowded assemblies of a London season; and the rich treasures of their own library, to the vapid talk and idle compliments of fashionable coxcombs. They fed more upon their own minds, and less upon external excitements; they admired art, but they admired nature more, and they saw her with more loving eyes when they learnt to worship

God in his works; that true worship that exalts whilst it humbles, and instead of contracting the mind, expands it; that teaches charity and self-distrust, instead of spiritual pride and intolerance; and makes man wonder at the littleness of man, that can quarrel, and fight, and persecute, for creeds, and forms, and ceremonies—measuring the mind of the great God of this great universe by his own poor standard, and thinking to please him by childish observances and vain respects that a rational human being would scorn and laugh at; and which can be of no effect, but to degrade and enslave the disciples that are taught to believe in their efficacy, and intoxicate, infatuate, and mislead the teachers. They had learnt, too, the value of truth and honest love, and they had learnt mercy and kindness, and wherein they consist—the quiet unostentatious kindness that the world does not commend or record, for that its best deeds are oftentimes unseen, and its most cruel omissions must remain for ever uncomplained of. They had learnt not to withhold the smile that warms, the sweet word that blesses, the gentle pressure of the hand that says, “Go and sleep in peace!” Mercies so poor to the giver, so rich to the receiver, that

he who denies them to entrench himself secure in unexceptionable civilities, is like one who, meeting a traveller athirst in the desert, should pour out his skin of water on the sand, and, passing on his way, cry, "Sir, God speed you!"

And Lady Lorton was right, when she said that it would take some time to rise again, after such a blow as had struck them to the earth. They needed rest and leisure to attune their minds that had been jangled; and repose—the graceful repose they now enjoyed—was happiness enough. Mr. Rivers, too, *was* nervous, and low spirited, and easily startled, and as absent and absorbed as when he had been calculating the chances on which his whole means of subsistence and of maintaining his family were risked. But was it to be wondered at? How much his pride had been wounded! How much self-reproach he had to endure! And what a vacuity the forsworn gaming-table must leave in his life! His daughters and his wife did their utmost to cheer and amuse him; and when Russell came, his spirits improved. The reserve and nervous sensitiveness that had of late come over him, seemed exorcised by Russell, with whom he was easy, confident, and generally cheerful.

There were two persons, however, who seemed to exercise a very baneful influence over him ; and they were Lady Eastlake and Nelly. He had been deeply discomposed by the interviews he had had with them. Lady Eastlake, whose illness confined her almost wholly to her house, he saw no more ; but Nelly would occasionally thrust herself into his presence, and whilst she called him " Master Marmaduke, dear," would give utterance to every bitter insinuation that her hatred and malignity prompted ; but these stings and disquiets he kept to himself, his family knew nothing of them. They were sure " dear papa " would recover his spirits when he had had a little time to forget his mortifications, and accustom himself to his new way of life ; and for this purpose, and in compliance with all their wishes, they were not to go to London for the next two or three seasons. They were even doubtful whether they should ever desire another season there ; they rather thought they should prefer Eastlake—varied, when variety was needed, by a trip to the Continent.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

" Ut sementem feceris, ita et metes."

CICERO.

" Would she and I, my wife
I mean ; but what, alas, talk I of wife ?
The woman, would we had together fed
On any outcast parings, coarse and mouldy,
Not lived divided thus."

THE LADIES' TRIAL.

It was a strange day that broke over Eastlake when the news came that William Bell was taken, and was on his way to the county jail. Hannah Graham had expected to learn the news first from Jessie, and she went early to the post-office to await the arrival of the mail, which, if their stratagem had succeeded, would probably bring the news. There was no letter for her, and she was wending her way homewards, when Mrs. Green, the hostess

of the "Black Bull," seeing her about to pass the door, rushed out and seized her by the shawl.

"Come in!" she said; "here's news that concerns you!"

Hannah turned pale and shook with the guilt that was in her. "What is it?" she asked, with a faltering voice.

"Guess."

"I can't. Is it about the horse Geordie wants to buy?"

"Horse—no! It was the first thing I saw when I opened the paper—William Bell's taken!"

"Indeed!"

"Ay, that is he; and who do you think told of him, and is to get all the money?"

"Lord knows!"

"You wouldn't guess from this to Christmas! Jessie Matthieson! There's her name in the paper in black and white."

"You don't say so!"

"I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it in print! Jessie Matthieson, that old Martha Bell was always so good to! Many a time I've seen Jessie, a baby, in her arms, crowing, as Martha stood at her own door and

tossed her up and down; and little Bill—a fine grown boy he was then, of seven or eight years old—would clap his hands, and cry, ‘Catch her!’ to make the child laugh; and when Mary Matthieson was ill of the fever, Martha took the infant, and spoon fed her till she was well again.”

“Shocking!” murmured Hannah Graham, with an involuntary shudder.

“I’d never have thought Jessie Matthieson would have done it!” continued Mrs. Green. “I wouldn’t change pillows with her this night! Eh, woman, take a glass of something,” continued the hostess; “I see I have been too sudden with you. I ought to have thought myself that William’s near and dear to them that’s near and dear to you; and no doubt Jessie’s wickedness ’ll vex you too. Lord’s sake, you’re as white as a turnip!”

“As we sow, so must we reap.” ’Twere a blessed thing if we could all remember that simple axiom, when we scatter the seed that will, sooner or later, shoot up and bear witness for us or against us.

Hannah’s punishment followed quick upon the heels of her fault. Slowly she bent her steps homewards, lingering on her road, for

she dreaded the sight of Lucy's tears, and she trembled to meet Geordie's penetrating glance—honest, firm-principled Geordie—that never veered to the right nor to the left to gain his ends or his objects, however desirable, but kept on his straight and even way, knowing that no good can prove good the steps whereto have been evil.

“Sally, girl,” cried Mrs. Dunn of the post-office to her unlovely daughter, “here! Run after your aunt with this letter; I overlooked it somehow. She hasn't been gone three minutes, and you'll overtake her before she gets home.”

Mrs. Dunn had not been let into the secret; she knew nothing of the contents of the letter; all she knew was, that her sister wished, at present, to receive her letters herself, and not have them sent up to the farm, where, if they happened to fall into Geordie's hands, they would assuredly be opened; not from any undue curiosity or suspicion on his part, but because the husband and wife had been in the habit of opening each other's letters, as a matter of course, ever since the day of their marriage.

Sally did run as she was told, and being all

unconscious that her aunt had just slipped into the "Black Bull," she ran past it, and never stopped till she bounced into the kitchen, where Geordie was sitting, with the letter in her hand.

"Eh, Sally, lass, what now?" said Geordie. "Have you something no good at your heels that you run so fast?"

"Is aunt here?" inquired Sally.

"No, she's awa' out," answered Geordie. "What's that a letter you've got for her? Who's it from?"

"I don't know," replied Sally, putting the packet into his outstretched hand. "Mother bid me run after aunt and give it her, but as I didn't see her, I thought she must have got home."

"Well, sit you down, lass, now, and rest," said Geordie, "whilst I see what the letter's about;" and so saying, he drew out his spectacles, and having first breathed upon them, he wiped them with the tail of his coat, and then, having deliberately put them on, he sat himself to examine the outside of the letter before he investigated its contents, a process very usual with persons to whom the receipt of a letter is an event of rare occurrence, being

an adroit mode of exercising their ingenuity, and of prolonging the excitement.

"From Lunnun!" said he, turning it to look at the direction, for, as it was closed with a wafer, there was no indication to be gathered from that part of its economy. "Who's thinking of writing to us from Lunnun? No doubt the postage will be something considerable."

"It 'ull be one and twopence, if it's single," replied Sally, rising and looking over his shoulder as if the letter were a family concern.

"I don't know the writing," said Geordie.

"It's like Jessie Matthieson's writing," said Sally, "only Jessie writes better than that."

"She may easy do that, lass," said Geordie.

"Betty Gibbs, that's got the palsy, might draw as straight a stroke as any one there. I wish it mayn't be from that ne'er-do-weel Joe Ricketts, to ask me to lend him money. His hand shakes with the drink as bad as Betty's with the palsy. 'Dear Mrs. Graham,'" said he, opening the letter, and flattening out the paper on his knee; and then, before he seriously addressed himself to its perusal, he turned over the leaf to look at the signature. "It is from Jessie Matthieson, sure enough!" he continued. "'I remain your for ever

miserable, Jessie Matthieson.' Eh! what now?" said he, turning back the leaf and beginning to read. "Poor foolish lass! My mind misgave me there was something wrong with her, when she came down here, dressed out like one o' the ladies that walk the streets in that sink of iniquity! 'Dear Mrs. Graham, I write this to tell you that I found him by the letter you wrote directed to X. Y. Z., just as you said I should. He didn't come to the post-office for it himself, but sent a girl, and I followed her to where he was.'" Thus far Geordie read very slowly, pausing between each word, in order to consider what this obscure intimation could possibly mean, for obscure it was to him. "Followed her to where he was! Where who was?" and then, casting his eye to the top of the page, where in the left hand corner the words "Dear Mrs. Graham" were huddled together, as if they were backing out of reach of some danger that threatened to assail them in front, he was just in the act of performing a *da capo*, when Sally, whose patience being quite exhausted by these dilatory proceedings, having hastily cast her eye over the page, called out—

"Oh, my! it's William Bell she's found! Read

down there, uncle! 'I told the constables, and they went and took him, and William knew it was me that told, and he said he wouldn't have thought it of me; and oh, Mrs. Graham, if it was to do again, I wouldn't do it for twice the money! I shall never be happy again the longest day I have to live; and if William's hanged, I shall feel just as if I'd murdered him! I wish I'd never come to Eastlake, or talked to you about it, for if you hadn't wrote the letter to catch him with, I never should have found him.' " So far read Sally Dunn, aloud, rapidly and eagerly, for her curiosity was no little awakened, whilst Geordie, whose eyes could not run over the lines so fast, sat amazed and confounded, straining his ears to take in words, the meaning of which his mind was at first incapable of conceiving. But no sooner did their signification reach his understanding, than, suddenly snatching the letter out of Sally's sight, who, as she hung over his shoulder, was running her finger along the lines that betrayed the painful secret, he crushed and crumpled it between his trembling hands, as if, with the paper, he sought to annihilate for ever all memory of the treachery it recorded; whilst,

with a countenance on which horror was depicted, he sat like a statue, staring upon vacancy.

At that exact moment the door opened, and Hannah Graham entered; pale and shaken too; but never dreaming of the accident that had happened from her delay, and resolved to strain every effort to conceal her guilt from her husband. In pursuance of which determination, assuming the most off-hand air she could command, she addressed him the instant she had set her foot over the threshold, with "Oh, Geordie, man, what do you think's the news that's come down by the paper from London? Why, what's the matter?" she added, as she observed the fearful expression of his fixed and pallid features. "Has Sally told you what has happened?"

"What has happened, woman!" cried Geordie, as he slowly and rigidly rose from his seat, "there's that happened that 'll make us two twain. Oh, woman! I'd sooner have walked after you to the churchyard, than we should both have lived to see this day!" And so saying, he flung the crushed paper—crushed into a ball by the energy of his indignant grasp—to the ground, and left the room.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"Sæpe premente Deo fert Deus alter opem."

*"After sharp showers, the sun shines fair,
And hope comes, likewise, after despair."*

WHEN William Bell, previous to his being committed to prison, was examined before the magistrates, no new evidence was adduced against him, nor were any fresh circumstances elicited that tended to prove him guilty of the death of Sir John Eastlake. Nevertheless, the presumptive evidence appeared so strong, that few people entertained the least doubt of his being the criminal, although many pitied him, and were inclined to weigh his provocation against his crime.

Peggy, however, was one of the few who were satisfied of his innocence. He had told

her he was innocent, and that was enough for her ; and, indeed, had she been convinced of his guilt, her love would have been no whit shaken, nor would her devotion to his person, nor her fidelity to his interests, have been in the smallest degree diminished. Mr. Mircliflor respected William more than he liked him ; the old man loved Peggy so much that he did not know how to excuse his want of tenderness and sympathy for her sufferings. “ *L’amour,*” as he said, “ *ne se commande pas ; il aime une autre—cela s’entend ; mais, la pitié, la douceur, les consolations de l’amitié, la considération pour son sexe, la reconnaissance qui est due a un cœur qui se donne tout entier, et qui demande si peu en revanche,—ah ! y manquer, c’est de la dureté.*”

“ He can’t help it, I suppose,” said Peggy, when she succeeded in comprehending these strictures ; “ and he’s not grateful to me for loving him, because he don’t want me to love him ; besides, he knows I can’t help myself ;” for Peggy had picked up some of her father’s philosophy, and was disposed to make great allowances for human weaknesses and imperfections, on the score of people not being able to help themselves.

“ Bien, c’est vrai,” replied Mr. Mirliflor, “ mais ce n’est pas généreux. Il a ses faiblesses aussi—lui ; et il doit compatir les tiens ; surtout, quand la force est avec lui ; et toi—tu n’est qu’une femme aimante et faible.”

“ Well, but father, never mind me now ! Will you try and get a lawyer for him at his trial ? and as I said before, I’ll stay with you as long as you like, and sing for you ; and all the money I earn, I’ll give you.”

“ Chère enfant !” said the old man, patting her on the head, “ you know I do what you wish ; you stay with me, c’est bon—that make me happy ; for the money, bah ! you shall have all I got.”

“ They say there’ll be plenty of lawyers down here when the judges come to try the prisoners, and then we can choose one. And now, father, let us go out and sing in front of the prison. I do think that was his hand that was put through the bars yesterday ; don’t you ?”

“ I don’t know one hand from another, mon enfant,” replied Mr. Mirliflor. “ Je n’ai pas les yeux d’amour ; qui, cependant, n’en a point, à ce qu’on dit ; et moi—je le crois.”

“What do you believe, father?”

“That love has no eyes, enfant.”

“I suppose they’re in his heart,” answered Peggy.

“Cela se peut,” said the old man,—“d’où vient qu’il voit ce qu’il aime, au lieu d’aimer ce qu’il voit.”

At length the eventful period arrived, which harbingered the doom of many an anxious heart; the judges and the sheriffs made their entrée; the city swarmed with lawyers and witnesses, actors and singers, prisoners and parsons, lords and ladies, county belles and beaux, milliners and dress-makers, hair-dressers and fiddlers; some to judge, some to be judged; some to preach, some to play; some to dress, some to be dressed; some to dance, and some to be hanged; forming a perfect epitome of human life in this motley world, where dancing and death, surfeit and starvation, births and burials, murders and marriages, music and mourning, gladness and gloom, are all in such close juxtaposition, and so curiously and grotesquely jumbled together, that it would be a convenience if nature had bethought herself of constructing our faces

after the fashion of the artist's whim, one side laughing, and the other weeping, that we might be ready prepared for all emergencies.

Mr. Mirliflor had kept his word, and had devoted part of the savings of his long peregrinations to providing counsel for William ; and Mr. Barnes, the gentleman in question, had visited the prison, and left it perfectly satisfied of his client's innocence ; but he also learned, in the course of the conversation, that the prisoner was not only already provided with eminent professional assistance, but had also received offers of service from a third party.

"Yes, sir," he said, "you are the third gentleman that has been here to say he is engaged by my friends to defend me ; but as I had accepted the offer of the first, I declined the other, as I do yours, sir ; as it is a pity to put my friends to a needless expense."

"Upon my word, you are fortunate," said the barrister, "in having so many friends."

"I've more than I was aware of, sir," answered William ; "for although the second gentleman told me who had sent him—it was the father of the young woman who was present when Sir John Eastlake was shot—I don't

know who engaged the first; he declined telling me; but he said he had received instructions to do all he could for me, provided he felt satisfied of my innocence; and after he had talked with me some time, he professed himself willing to undertake the case."

"At all events, you could not be better provided for," said Mr. Barnes, taking his leave; "and I wish you good luck."

We will not attempt to describe poor Peggy's feelings when the important moment arrived, and she beheld the idol of her heart led to the bar to be tried for his life—inno-cent, as she was sure he was; but whether innocent or guilty, equally dear to her. Through the kind intervention of Mr. Barnes, she and the old Frenchman were placed where they had a full view of the object of their interest, and he of them; and her heart swelled with tenderness and devotion when William—hard though he was to her, yet, on this occasion, affected by her constant and courageous love—gave her a kind look and a gentle smile, whilst he brushed a tear of gratitude from his eye.

The counsel for the prosecution opened the case by detailing all those circumstances con-

nected with the death of Sir John Eastlake, with which the reader, who has accompanied us thus far, is already acquainted; dwelling particularly on the motives of the prisoner for deserting his regiment, and on his avowed enmity to the baronet, both of which would be found testified under his own hand in a letter that would be produced. Neither, he said, was there any other person towards whom suspicion could be directed. There *was* a young man who had been at first supposed to be either a party or a principal in the crime; but he had effectually established his innocence by coming boldly forward, and would now be found a very important witness for the prosecution. He then expatiated on the merits of the late baronet—his popular character, his good nature, his liberality to his tenants, &c.; a man who never made an enemy, unless, indeed, that enemy were a rival—such an enemy, it was to be feared, was the prisoner at the bar. It was not his duty to justify or condemn the idle gallantries of a single man, into which he was probably led as much by the *agaceries* of the fair sex, as by his own inclination—gallantries which were only mischievous when they fell upon a too fruitful

soil—a soil that but waited for the first gleam of warmth, to throw out the weeds with which its bosom was rife; but whatever pangs such light follies might occasionally inflict, mankind must be taught to restrain their passions, and withhold their vengeance, and not seek to slake the furies of their jealous frenzy in the blood of their fellow-creatures. He then proceeded to say, that the first witness he should call, would be the confidential valet of the late baronet, a young man who had been so deeply attached to his master, that his health had never recovered the shock he had received at the period of the lamentable catastrophe.

The appearance of Mr. Groves when he entered the court and advanced to the witness-box, presented, certainly, a strong corroboration of this statement; he looked more like one newly risen from the grave than a man that walked the earth; his cheeks were hollow, his hair thin and grey, the flesh was wasted from his bones, and his shrunk limbs seemed scarcely able to support the poor remnant of body that remained, whilst his features were so drawn and distorted from their natural expression, that his own mother might have turned him from her door and disowned him.

It would be losing time to repeat his evidence, as it was but a recapitulation of that he had given before the magistrates; he reiterated his assertion, that he had not seen the prisoner on the day of the murder; nor, indeed, had he seen him for upwards of three years, till now that he saw him at the bar. He had never been much acquainted with him, but he had always believed him to be a young man of excellent character. To the inquiry whether he had seen anybody at all in the wood when Sir John Eastlake was shot, he declared he had not. He was aware of the engagement subsisting between the prisoner and the young woman called Lucy Graham, and he was also aware that his master had for some time been paying her attention; he did not think she responded to it; indeed, he knew she did not; she would not have anything to say to Sir John; she would not listen to him; he knew nothing of the prisoner's jealousy; but he had sometimes heard people say, they "wondered how William Bell would like the way the squire was going on with Lucy Graham." With respect to Lucy's behaviour, when he found her at the Four Stones with the body, he could give very little account,

having been himself so much surprised and shocked that he was incapable of observation. He remembered she had said that the gun had gone off and shot his master; and he thought it probable that the baronet had attempted to kiss her, and she having resisted, the gun had gone off in the struggle. He had not thought of examining the gun, nor did he observe in what position it was lying; indeed, he believed he had quite lost his presence of mind; and he had but a very faint recollection of anything that happened after he had discovered the dead body. He did not know how he got to the castle; he remembered nothing till he found himself there.

The next witness called was Lucy Graham; and she too bore in her countenance and wasted figure, sad traces of the anxious hours she had lately passed. The substance of her evidence was also precisely the same as that she had given at the inquest. There was a discrepancy remarked on both occasions; she admitted that she had suggested to Mr. Groves that the gun had gone off spontaneously and killed the baronet, though, at the same time, she asserted, she felt almost sure that at the moment the

victim was about to fall, his eyes were fixed upon his assassin; and that that assassin was immediately behind her, and had fired over her head, she being at the time on her knees. On being required to account for these contradictory statements, she attributed them to her confusion and terror at so strange and sudden an event; but on being closely questioned as to whether she had not any ulterior motive for attributing the death to an accident, she admitted that she was, perhaps, in some degree influenced by the apprehension that William Bell might be suspected; she owned also that her first impulse was to suspect him herself, when she saw him arrive so immediately afterwards; but his manner, as well as his words, had thoroughly convinced her of his innocence. She underwent a very stringent cross-examination; but she was perfectly collected and clear in her account of the circumstances; and as she knew nothing more, nothing more could be elicited. When she entered the court, and till her evidence was concluded, she had studiously avoided turning her eyes towards her lover, lest the sight of him might unnerve her, and disable her from giving her testimony with

distinctness and decorum; and William, who had eagerly anticipated the moment of her entrance, was so much alarmed and agitated by what he feared was a symptom of disaffection, that he forgot all the other perils by which he was surrounded, to think only of the one that went nearest his heart. But when she was about to retire, she turned her eyes full upon him; and with a sad and tender smile, gave him a look that lightened his breast of that worst load, and left him nerved to meet any fate that might await him.

The next witness was Leonard. Leonard, as we have described him, or rather as his conduct has exhibited him, will be seen to be a very different character to his sister. He was naturally weaker in body as well as in mind; not that we mean to imply that there was any deficiency of intellect, but he wanted firmness and self-command, and was the slave of his feelings and affections. On this occasion, he was overwhelmed with the consciousness of the office he had to perform, which was, in fact, to give his unwilling testimony against his friend, and almost brother, and to help to convict him of a crime of which he certainly

believed him guilty, but for which, knowing the provocation he had received, and judging William's feelings by his own, he could scarcely find in his heart to blame him; and he was oppressed, too, with the painful consciousness that, but for the trigger his friend had drawn, he should himself have been the murderer, and that it was but a stroke of Fortune's wand that had placed him there in the witness-box instead of at the bar. Overcome by these feelings and reflections, he entered the court in a state of nervous excitement, that attracted the attention and awakened the expectations of the whole audience, whilst the agonised look he cast at William, served both to increase his own agitation, and to confirm their notion that he had some evidence to give that would be extremely adverse to the prisoner. Having detailed his motives for going to Calderwood, he was interrogated with respect to those which had induced him to place himself in ambush in the wood; and as the resentment and passion which had led him to form the desperate resolution of shooting his supposed rival had long since passed away, he naturally felt a great deal of remorse and

shame at avowing himself, thus publicly, a murderer in intention, though not in fact. Thus his whole account of the affair, both as to what regarded himself, and the slight glance he had of William, was so confused and indistinct, and his evidence was extracted with so much difficulty, that the general impression he left was—that he knew more than he could be induced to tell; and the manner of his testimony was more injurious to his friend than the substance of it.

Next came Geordie Graham, who, on being asked what he knew of the affair, answered, “Nothing.” At least, it was urged, he knew the prisoner’s motives for deserting his regiment.

“Yes,” he said, “he knew that to his sorrow, for there was one near to him that was much to blame in it.” His answers, as far as they went, were entirely favourable to William, and he said, “He was sure the lad hadn’t done it, if he had, he wouldn’t have stood there at the bar, and cried to their lordships “Not guilty!”

There were few people present who, could they have penetrated the feelings with which

Hannah Graham entered the witness-box, would not rather have changed places with the prisoner at the bar than with her. In her underhand dealings and treacherous interference had lain the source of all the misery, and of all the crime, too, if, as she believed, William was really guilty. The wretchedness was all of her own making, and she had crowned and completed the sum of her misdeeds by betraying the victim of her narrow and selfish policy into the hands of justice, perhaps of injustice, for she did not *know* that he was guilty. Her husband and her daughter, and many others of the village of Eastlake, thought otherwise; but that he would be condemned to suffer the penalty of the crime, very few doubted. And there she stood to tell her own tale of shame like a sinner at the day of judgment, warning, by her example, all who heard her, to keep their thoughts and their deeds, however secret, so pure and stainless, that they may not tremble at their exposure to man on earth nor to God in heaven.

Lord Belton, the servants at Eastlake Castle, Serjeant Lawson, and some others, were examined for the prosecution, but no

particulars were elicited beyond those already known. Leonard's evidence, and William's own letter to Lucy, wherein he expressed considerable resentment towards the baronet, and used expressions that might, by a little straining, be interpreted into threats, were the two circumstances that told most against him; and these, together with the absence of any other person on whom to fix a suspicion, pretty well sufficed to establish him as the criminal in the minds of all present; and although the defence of his counsel, Mr. Hope, was very eloquent, and the testimony of those who were called to speak to his character was very favourable, still this opinion was not shaken, although many looked upon him with commiseration, believing that the crime had been the offspring of sudden passion, and not of premeditation.

"But," said Mr. Hope, to the surprise of everybody, when they believed his resources for the defence of the prisoner were exhausted, "I have another witness to call. If I can prove that there *was* another party in the neighbourhood at the time, whose proceedings were mysterious, and whose inquiries with

respect to the movements of Sir John Eastlake were suspicious, I shall, at least, be able to overthrow one assertion on which the persuasion of my client's criminality is founded—namely, that there is no other individual on whom suspicion can affix.”

After a short interval, a man was placed in the witness-box, who, on being interrogated, said his name was “ John Gubbins.”

“ You reside, I believe, within a few miles of Eastlake?”

“ Yes, sir, about eight miles.”

“ You keep a little inn or public-house?”

“ Yes, sir ; ‘ The Cat and Bagpipes ’ my house is called.”

“ And, if I understand rightly, it stands by the road-side, and alone?”

“ Yes, sir, there's no house within half a mile of it.”

“ Now, have the goodness to call to mind, whether any person stopped at your house, in the early part of last October, that particularly attracted your attention?”

“ Yes, sir, a gentleman as alighted at my door from off the north coach.”

“ What sort of gentleman was he?”

"An elderly gentleman; he might be fifty, more or less, but he looked worn-like and haggard, as if he'd had sickness or trouble."

"On what day was this?"

"It was the day before Sir John Eastlake was shot."

"Had you ever seen the gentleman before?"

"No, never."

"Did you know who he was?"

"No."

"For what reasons, then, did he excite your observation?"

"First, because I was surprised a gentleman of his appearance should stop at my house, where gentlefolks don't stop, except it's now and then one as is sporting or fishing."

"Had you any other reason for observing him?"

"Yes; he asked me if I could tell him whether Sir John Eastlake was then at the Castle, and what company was there."

"And what did you answer?"

"I said that Sir John was at Calderwood, staying with Sir James Dalton; but that he was going home the next day, as there was a good deal of company at the Castle."

“ And what did he say to that ? ”

“ He seemed vexed about the company ; and he asked me how I knew that Sir John would go home on the following day . ”

“ And how did you know it ? ”

“ I knew it because one of the grooms from Calderwood had called at my house that morning, to inquire for a parcel that was to be dropped by the mail, and he told me so . ”

“ And what did the stranger say on receiving that information ? ”

“ He was some time without saying anything ; he seemed to be thinking . ”

“ Well, and when he had done thinking, what did he say ? ”

“ He asked me how far it was to Calderwood ; and I told him it was nearly five miles to the house, but not above three to the park gate . ”

“ And what did he do then ? ”

“ He looked at his watch, and seemed to be considering whether he should go on to Calderwood ; at least, so I thought . ”

“ And did he go on ? ”

“ No, he didn't. He asked me if I could accommodate him with a room for the night . ”

“ And you said you could ? ”

"Yes, I said I could; and then he fell to questioning me about the road from Calderwood to Eastlake, and whether it did not pass very close to my house, and I said it did, and shewed him the direction of it."

"Well, and what happened next?"

"He went into the house and asked for a cup of tea; for whilst we'd been talking we'd been standing at the door."

"Well, go on; relate everything you recollect."

"Whilst he was drinking the tea, he asked me a great many questions about Sir John, and my lady; and I thought he seemed to know a great deal about the place."

"And what did he do after tea?"

"He went out and walked on the road to Calderwood."

"Did he walk long?"

"He walked a good while—till it was quite dark, and some time after."

"And what did he do when he came in?"

"He asked for pen and ink, and paper, and sat down to write; and I believe he wrote all night; at least, he didn't go to bed at all."

"How do you know?"

"Because the bed hadn't been lain in; besides, I heard him, every now and then, walking about the parlour. It kept me awake, listening to him, and thinking what he could be doing."

"And what happened in the morning?"

"He rang the bell very early and asked for hot water; and desired to have some breakfast."

"And did you take him the hot water?"

"Yes, I took it to his room myself."

"And what was he doing when you entered the room?"

"He was opening a small portmanteau that he had with him, and taking out some clean linen."

"And did he say anything to you?"

"Yes, just as I was going out of the room, he called me back and told me to take his coat, and brush it."

"Had he his coat off at the time?"

"No, he hadn't, but he took it off, and was giving it me, and then he seemed to recollect himself, and he took it back, and emptied the things out of the pockets and put them on the bed."

“And did you see what those things were?”

“Yes, there was a purple silk handkerchief, and a white one, and two or three letters, and a pair of gloves, and a pair of pistols.”

The announcement of the pistols caused an evident sensation in the court. Some raised their eyebrows, others looked at their friends, and those that took snuff, regaled their noses with a pinch; many glanced at the prisoner, who was listening with deep attention to these unexpected revelations; and amongst the latter, it may be easily supposed, Peggy was included. But a few moments before, her heart had been sinking with terror, for she feared his case was desperate; but now the affair was taking a very different complexion. She and everybody else believed that Mr. Hope must know a great deal more about this mysterious stranger than was yet disclosed, and the whole audience were on the *qui vive* to hear the sequel.

However, that did not prove so interesting as was expected. All that was elicited by further interrogating John Gubbins, was, that the stranger, having dressed and breakfasted, went out very early, and that the impression on the host's mind was, that he had set off to

Calderwood, to see Sir John Eastlake there, or with the expectation of meeting him on the road; and that he saw no more of him till the afternoon, when he came back, and hastily inquired what was the first coach that would pass, and the host having informed him that the "Dispatch," for London, would be up in less than half an hour, he asked for a biscuit and a glass of beer, which having taken, he went to his room and fastened up his portmanteau, paid his bill, and when the coach arrived, took his seat outside, and departed.

On being asked if he had ever seen the gentleman since, or could tell who he was, he replied in the negative; but there were many persons present who remarked that this denial was not pronounced in the confident tone with which he had given the rest of his evidence, and that a strange change passed over his countenance as he uttered the word, "No."

Mr. Hope claiming the benefit of these mysterious circumstances for his client, and averring that they had been discovered at so late a period that he had not been able to carry his investigations further, the trial was postponed, and William Bell was remanded to

prison; certainly with a lighter heart than he had left it; for knowing himself to be innocent, he very naturally concluded that the stranger must be the criminal, and would be proved so; and that he should thus, at least, escape the horror of dying the death of a convicted murderer.

END OF VOL. II.

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